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OR,

DEUCE-TREY, The Five-Spot Sport.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER.

CHAPTER I.

AN ADVENT IN A SNOWSTORM.

THE camp of Whoop-up, about a two days' journey, on horseback, from Virginia City, was a "whooping" town.

DEUCE-TREY LIFTED CLANCY UP BODY AND WHIRLING HIM OVER HIS HEAD,
SENT HIM HEAD-FIRST AFTER TERRELL.

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As yet, however, the place had not experienced the "boom" that usually comes to most mining-camps, sooner or later, although every citizen stoutly maintained that it was close at hand.

The night which marks the opening of our story was about as bad a one as the camp of Whoop-up had ever experienced.

It was winter, and along in the afternoon a snowstorm had set in with a force that bade fair to make it the deepest snow of the season.

By nine o'clock the snow was body deep to a horse, on the level, and not a citizen was to be found out of doors, although for the most part they were congregated in the Cocktail Saloon, where they were amusing themselves in various ways, after the approved fashion.

Outside the wind was howling, and the snow-ghosts dashed up against the windows, or brushed past, wild, weird and fantastic.

Inside all was mellow light and goodly cheer.

Said "Buck" Williams:

"Et's goin' to be a bad 'un, an' you kin tell yer folks I say so."

Williams, by the way, was the proprietor of the Cocktail. As everybody agreed with him in his view, he was not disputed.

The bar of the saloon was being well patronized, but the chief center of interest seemed to be the green-cloth tables; and of these, particularly that one where the "tiger" held sway.

Here several men were engaged in gambling, and as they were leading citizens of the camp their stakes were by no means trifling.

There was Samuel Bergman, chief owner and manager of the Squint-eye Mine; Robert Terrell, chief clerk and cashier of the local bank of which Henry Hurston, another of the players, was the head; and others whose names will be mentioned further long.

Suddenly every man in the room was startled by a resounding knock at the front door.

"Walk right in!" sung out Buck Williams.

But the knock was repeated.

"Come in! come in!" the proprietor shouted at the top of his voice.

Again, however, came the knock, this time louder and more imperative than ever, and every man looked at his neighbor.

"What kin et mean?" questioned one "Fire-eater Flip."

"Open ther door an' see, Fire eater," ordered Williams; but, the direction was unnecessary, for the fellow had stepped forward to do so, even as he spoke.

The door was thrown open, a great bank of snow came tumbling in, followed by a cloud of the same propelled by a gust of wind, and also by a man on horseback, muffled to the ears.

Every man was on his feet in an instant, and ejaculations of surprise were heard on every hand.

In his hand the rider held the heavy-handled whip with which he had knocked.

Horse and rider were alike covered with snow.

"You were slow about opening your door, landlord," the rider complained. "I can tell you every minute counts one, out there, gentlemen; if you don't believe it, just step out and see."

"We'll take yer word fer et," assured Fire-eater Flip.

"Thought yer could open fer yerself," explained Williams. "Didn't know yer was mounted. I hollered fer yer ter come in right off ter oncet, soon's yer knocked."

"Not likely that any man would stop to knock, on a night like this, if he could open the door himself. I couldn't reach the latch, you see. But, no matter; here we are, and by the looks of things I guess we have come to stay."

The stranger had slipped out of his saddle, and was proceeding to unbutton his coat and shake off the snow.

He had thrown off his sealskin cap, and his face could be seen.

A young man, maybe twenty-five years of age, he had black hair and eyes and a dark mustache.

"What about yer hoss?" asked the proprietor.

"Just what I meant to ask, soon as I got around to it," was the response. "Where can you put him?"

"Thar ain't no place, 'cept a shed back of the saloon. I reckon he'll have to take his chances there, ef et ain't snowed full."

"That the best the camp can do?"

"I opine et aire."

"Then my horse will have to stay right where he is for the night. We'll put him over there in that corner, out of the way, and—"

"Hal! hal! I'm durn'd if that ain't cool, anyhow! Make a stable of the Cocktail Saloon? Well, I reckon not. Stranger, I wouldn't keep yer hoss in hyer fer a ten-dollar yallerbird!"

"I'll give you twenty dollars for that corner for the night."

"Yer couldn't have et fer fifty!"

"I'll give you sixty!"

"No!"

"I'll make it seventy-five, spot cash!"

Still the answer was no, but the newcomer noted that it was not spoken in so positive a manner as before.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said quickly: "I'll give you an even hundred dollars, not a cent more. Take that or nothing. I am going to stop here, and my horse is going to stay with me."

"Wull, seein' that it is a most durnation nasty night outside, I'll let ther critter stay fer that figger."

There was a laugh from the crowd, immediately.

"You are a man of business, Buck, sure enough," observed Henry Hurston. "You know a hundred dollars when you see it."

As the stranger had by this time cast off his rubber garment and overcoat, a better estimate of him could be formed, and not a man in the room but was improving the opportunity.

He was well dressed in a suit of dark stuff, and had on a pair of tall topped waterproof calf boots, with his trousers folded inside the legs, of course. He wore a "b'iled" shirt and standing collar, and on the bosom of his shirt, which did not show a wrinkle, flashed a diamond pin.

This pin was peculiar in itself, and at first glance one might think that a stone was missing, but such was not the case. It was shaped like this:



Where the stone was apparently missing there never had been a setting.

The man drew a roll of bills from his pocket, counted out the one hundred and laid it on the bar, and that done, gave attention to his horse.

He took off the saddle and bridle in a moment, while the landlord was putting away his money; then he led the horse to the corner which he had paid for, while comment ran round the room.

"Now, where is the man who wants to make five dollars by procuring feed and bedding for the animal, and taking care of him?" the sport asked.

Fire eater Flip was prompt to sing out:

"I'm yer bower, at that figger."

"All right. Here is your money; and now, landlord, you can fodder me, if there is anything to eat in your shebang, and I suppose you have got something stored away in the larder."

"Oh, yes, thar's somethin' left yet, stranger; but et's lucky Grudge an' Higgins got in a stock before the storm."

"Who are Grudge and Higgins?"

"They keep the only general store ou camp at present affords, sir," spoke up Henry Hurston. "We are probably safe against getting starved out, even if we do get snowed under."

"Well, that's good, anyhow. I take this isn't a regular hotel, eh, landlord?"

"Et is, an' et ain't. Et's the nearest thing to a hotel in ther camp."

"Well, trot out the feed, please!"

"Yes, ter be sure. You, Ben, go an' kick that Chineese in ther kitchen, an' tell him to git up somethin', double quick. By the way, stranger, what's yer name?"

"I am called Deuce-Trey."

"Deuce-Trey?"

"Yes, Deuce-Trey, the Five-Spot Sport."

"What ther deuce fer a name is that, anyhow? D'ye hear what he says his cognome, aire, boys?"

The game at the faro table had been at a standstill ever since the first summons at the door by this stranger, and the name had been heard by all, since all were attentive.

"The deuce-trey, as you see, sir," rejoined the sport, as with his finger he indicated the pin on his bosom, "and from it I take my name—Deuce-Trey, the Five-Spot Sport. Who will come up and take a drink with me?"

CHAPTER II.

THE PLACARD AND REWARD.

THERE was no need of a second invitation. Every "galoot" in the place was on hand promptly, there being a grand rush for the bar at the sports inquiry.

"Hal! hal!" the Five-Spot Sport laughed. "I see you are not at all backward here gentlemen. Set out the stuff for them landlord, and take it out of this," flipping a double-eagle upon the bar as he spoke. "I like to do the right thing when I arrive in a strange camp."

"Three cheers fer ther Deuce-Trey!" one man proposed, and while they were being given the sport took a seat at a vacant table by the wall, where he awaited the coming of his supper.

During this time one man in the room had been observing him keenly, and this one was Robert Terrell.

He now cashed in his few remaining chips and pulled out of the game.

Crossing over, he took a seat at the sports table.

"I beg your pardon, stranger," he said "but it seems to me that I ought to know you; your face is certainly familiar."

"Quite likely you have seen me somewhere before," answered the Five-Spot Sport, suavely. "I have traveled up and down the world quite a little in my time."

"May I ask where you are from?"

"Oregon."

"Is that your home?"

"I am as much at home here as anywhere, sir."

"Which politely tells me to mind my own business and not meddle with yours, I take it."

"You are putting your own construction upon my words, sir."

"Well, no matter; I find I was mistaken. I took you to be a gentleman of some distinction whom I knew by sight a couple of years ago. Beg your pardon for pushing myself upon you."

"Oh, don't mention it. But, whom did you take me to be?"

The man leaned over and said in lower tone:

"Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"I have heard of the fellow," said the sport, in his same easy manner. "Something of an outlaw, I believe. I certainly feel flattered—"

"No, no; you have in mind the original Deadwood Dick, who, I believe, did have some such stigma upon his name. Deadwood Dick, Junior, is a detective, one of the keenest in the world."

"That is better, then; still I cannot lay claim to any such distinction as that, Mr.—Mr.—"

"My name is Robert Terrell, sir."

"You will have to admit that you were mistaken, Mr. Terrell."

"Yes, it is plain that I was mistaken, Mr.—Mr. Five-Spot Sport. Pardon my intrusion."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Terrell."

The chief clerk and cashier of the local bank arose and walked away, and just about that time a typical Chinaman entered by a rear door, bearing a tray of eatables which he set down before the stranger.

It was a meal good enough for any hungry mortal, and the savor of the bowl of steaming coffee was particularly grateful.

This bowl was a big one, and it rested in a saucer large in proportion.

"You havee anysing more?" the Chinese asked.

"No, nothing more, thank you, John," the sport answered. "This is a repast good enough for a king."

While the sport was speaking the Chinaman lifted the bowl of coffee from the saucer, replacing it immediately, but giving time enough for the sport to catch sight of a bit of paper under it.

"You savvy?" he asked, in lower tone. "You cathee on?"

"All right, John," the response, "and thank you!"

The sport looked at the Chinaman searchingly, now, and his eyes followed him as he shuffled out of the room.

"Say, landlord, what's the name of your heathen?" he called out.

"We call him Chin Shang," the answer.

"Well, you can set it down for a fact that he is a good cook, anyhow; I know that before I tackle his viands, just by the smell of them."

The sport fell to, then, getting down to business in a way that proved he was hungry.

In the mean time Robert Terrell had joined his employer, Henry Hurston, who, also, had drawn out of the game.

"That man is a mystery, Mr. Hurston," observed Terrell.

"A mystery? In what way, Terrell? He seems like an open-hearted fellow, I think."

"He may be all right, of course, but I doubt it. I made an effort to get at his name, but he would not disclose it. Simply calls himself what you heard."

"Which he undoubtedly has a right to do."

"I admit it; but, he is reticent respecting where he hails from, and I have my suspicions that he isn't straight. Do you think he can be that fellow, Howard Smithy?"

"Ha!"

The banker uttered an exclamation and looked searchingly at the stranger, and from him turned his gaze to a placard on the wall.

This placard, which was dated some months back, set forth the offer of a reward of five thousand dollars for the arrest of one Howard Smithy.

Smithy was described as a man twenty-six years of age, about five feet ten in height, weighing about a hundred and seventy pounds, with black hair and eyes, and a dark mustache. Certainly this stranger filled the bill pretty closely. From the poster Hurston again turned his eyes upon the man.

"What do you think?" asked Terrell.

"The man certainly answers the description. How did you come to think of it so promptly?"

"To tell the truth, I have had an eye

open for him ever since that notice was put up here; not that I ever expected to see him, but if he did come my way I meant to go for that reward."

"And you are going for him?"

"I mean to find out whether he is the man or not, if possible."

"Well, I don't blame you, for five thousand dollars is not to be picked up every day. But, go slow."

"What do you mean?"

"He looks like a man of sand."

"The poster describes Smithy as a nervy fellow."

"Let's see: this robbery took place about five months ago, down at Tucson, Arizona?"

"Exactly. The cashier of the Gold and Silver Bank put sixty thousand dollars in his pocket one fine morning and skipped out, and that was the last of him, so far as we know."

"That is the whole story in a nutshell, Terrell. I'll tell you what I'll do for you."

"What's that?"

"I'll sound him when chance offers."

"I wish you would. I can't well approach him again, to-night."

Meantime the Five-Spot Sport was pushing right ahead with his repast, apparently paying no attention to anything else.

He was not unmindful, however, of the attention that Terrell and his companion were bestowing upon him, and rightly judged that their conversation was concerning himself.

The placard on the wall was behind him where he sat, but he noticed that Terrell's companion was looking at something interesting in that direction, and resolved to learn what that something was when he got up from the table.

Nor had he forgotten the bit of paper under his cup.

Removing the bowl he placed it just outside the saucer, between it and the men who were observing him.

He went right on eating, but, as he did so, he examined the bit of paper in the saucer, to read this brief message:

"Want to speak to you."

"CHIN SHANG."

The sport naturally felt surprise, but did not show it, and when his meal was finished he replaced the bowl in the saucer and rose from the table with a satisfied air.

"Yes, landlord," he declared, "your Chinese is a good cook, and that supper is worth a tip. I'm going out and give him one, if you don't object. Where is your kitchen? All right; this is the way. Hello! Chin Shang, where are you?"

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS CHINAMAN.

WHILE speaking, the sport opened the door by which the Chinaman had entered the room.

It led into the kitchen of the establishment at once, and Chin Shang put in his appearance immediately in response to the sport's call.

The sport had pulled to the door, after him, a little, but not enough to close it tightly, and in voice loud enough to be heard by those nearest to the door, he addressed the Chinaman:

"That was a good supper, John, and I want to thank you for it. Here is something to shove into your pocket," and he gave the Chinese a coin.

"Allee samee not muchee goodee," the cook depreciated. "No have many t'ings to cookee inuchee nice." And then in lower tone: "You read the note?"

"There was no pigeon English about that!"

"Yes, and that's why I'm here. What do you want to say?"

"No time now; must see you again. I know you, and I want your help."

"You know me?"

"Yes; you are Deadwood Dick, Junior." The Five-Spot Sport smiled, as if at the mistake thus made again.

"This is the second time I have been taken for that person since I arrived," he said.

"Ha! is that so? But, no time to talk now. Look out for yourself! See you later." And then louder: "Allee samee Chin Shang thankee 'Melican man, and tly to pleasee him evely time."

"You're all right, John, you bet! Landlord," as the sport stepped out into the main room again, "your Chinese is a brick, from the ground up, and I have made myself solid with him. Hello! what's this? Somebody is wanted, I take it, by the looks of this."

He referred to the notice of reward, which just then caught his eye—apparently by chance, though he had purposely looked to learn what it was that Terrell's companion had found so interesting, a few minutes before. This was it, undoubtedly, and he rightly guessed the drift of their conversation.

"That notice has been up here a considerable time, sir," informed Henry Hurston.

"Yes, I see it looks rather like a back number."

"Never seen that reward before?"

"Would not like to say, positively, sir. A fellow sees a good many such notices, in the course of his travels."

"Then you are a traveler?"

"Yes."

"Ever been down in that part of the country?"

"Yes, I have been in Arizona. Good stiff offer, five thousand; wouldn't object to picking that up, myself."

"Mr. Sport," and the banker rose and stepped leisurely forward, "the more I look at you the more I am struck with your likeness to the description given of this man Smithy."

"Yes?"

"Yes, decidedly! Height, weight, hair, eyes, mustache—really you appear to fill the bill!"

"I don't know but you are right, sir," with the utmost nonchalance. "That is about the way you would have to describe me, I guess. But, there are thousands of men of the same general make-up."

"Oh! undoubtedly, sir. Do not think for a moment that I would insinuate that you are Howard Smithy, the defaulter."

"Not going to take offense, sir. But, I think I'll consult a phrenologist as soon as chance offers."

"A phrenologist?"

"So I said."

"What do you want with one of those fellows?"

"Why, your friend there took me for a great detective a few moments ago, and now you have likened me to a thief. Ha! ha! ha! Quite a joke, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Hurston—Henry Hurston."

"Quite a joke, Mr. Hurston."

The sport had looked toward Terrell as he spoke, pointing, too, and for a second the chief clerk flushed slightly.

"Mistake all around, it seems," he remarked.

"Decidedly," assured the Five-Spot Sport. "For Mr. Hurston there is some excuse, however; for you, none."

"How do you figure that out?" asked the banker.

"Easily enough. You had this description of the placard to go by, while Mr. Terrell had nothing— But, pardon me, Mr. Terrell, I am wrong; you said you had known that detective, and that I look like him."

It could be seen, by those keen enough to read it, that Terrell did not take kindly to this.

At that moment all attention was drawn to the faro table.

"Curse the luck!" the mine-owner had loudly exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the board with a crash. "Did any one ever see such an infernal run as I am having?"

"What's the matter, sir?" asked the Five-Spot Sport.

"Matter? Everything is the matter! I have not won a single draw to-night, with half the afternoon added to it. If I stay in any longer this fellow will have my mine, and everything else I've got."

Bergman was one who had not left his seat, or rather who had resumed his seat, immediately after the excitement attending the arrival of the Five-Spot Sport had abated.

"Your luck ought to turn, if you stick to one line of play," averred the sport, as he stepped forward.

"The trouble is, he has been jumping all around," explained the dealer.

"And every time he jumped he missed, eh?"

"About the size of it."

"Don't know but I'll try a hand at this, myself, just for pastime," observed the sport, and he sat down by the table.

He brought some money to light and made a liberal purchase of chips, and the game began—or rather continued, and at the first draw the stranger was a winner.

Bergman lost again.

"I'm going to follow you, sir," he declared, savagely, "and see what luck it will bring me."

"Just as you like about that," was the suave answer.

At the next draw both lost. And so it continued to the next, and the next, and for several turns.

"See here, what is your name, sir?" queried the sport.

"Samuel Bergman," was growled.

"Glad to know it; I was beginning to think it might be Jonah."

The mine-manager flushed furious and leaped to his feet, his eyes flashing with anger.

"See here, George Clancy," he cried, confronting the dealer, "are you dealing a perfectly square game?"

"As straight as a string, Mr. Bergman, I assure you," responded the dealer, a good-looking young fellow of about twenty-four years of age.

"You need have no doubt of that, sir," assured the Five-Spot Sport. "At any rate, he has done nothing crooked since I sat down here—or if he has, I have been unable to detect it."

Clancy cast a glance at the stranger.

"I am glad you are able to judge, sir," he said. "I am not responsible for the run of luck Mr. Bergman has had."

"This is evidently not your night, sir," remarked the sport, turning to the mine-owner.

"It seems not; but, by heavens, if I don't play faro I can play poker, and as you have taken half my pile to-night, Clancy, I dare you to try me at poker from now till midnight."

"If you insist upon it, sir, and if the other players are willing that I should close the bank."

"That is hardly fair to me, as I have only just begun," explained the sport. "However, I won't kick if you will let me take a hand with you at the new game. What do you say?"

"I'm agreeable," assented Clancy.

"And it's all the same to me," coincided Bergman.

"Yes, poker let it be, and I'll come in, too," urged the bank cashier.

So, the faro lay-out was quickly put out of sight and the players took their seats for the new game.

Needless to say, this table was the center of interest from that moment, for some "tall" playing was looked for, and it was

destined to become a good deal taller than any one anticipated. That game has to do with our story.

CHAPTER IV.

A NOVELTY IN POKER PLAY.

It fell to the Five-Spot Sport to deal.

The four had agreed that it should be a game without a limit, just to make it interesting.

Five dollars was the ante, and this alone was enough to make it a game of considerable interest, to say nothing about the other feature.

The ante was put up all around, the cards were dealt out slowly, and each man of the four looked at his hand. Some called for two cards more, discarding, and others for only one.

The betting was not heavy, and Bergman won the pile.

Thus it went for a time, moderately, until finally, upon Terrell's second deal, things began to liven up.

Neither he nor Bergman took any other cards, and when the betting commenced these two dipped in heavily. The Five-Spot Sport and Clancy pulled out, leaving them in possession.

"I'll lift that just five hundred dollars," said Terrell, putting up the dust as he said so.

"And I'll boost that up an even thousand," cried Bergman. "I think I have got you where I want you this time, my fine fellow. What do you say to that? Does it scare you?"

"Not a bit, sir. Here is your thousand, and another on top of it."

"The deuce! But, I am in to stay, and I'll give you another lift. I have a notion that you are bluffing."

"Don't fool yourself about that, Mr. Bergman."

"I'm bound that you sha'n't fool me about it, anyhow. Here is your thousand, with another along with it."

"Ha! that is what I like to see, sir. Now it begins to get exciting. I will see that thousand, and put just five thousand dollars on top of that. Now, sir, raise it again if you dare."

"Thunder!" the mine-owner exclaimed, his face growing somewhat pale. "That is bigger than my pile."

"Your paper is good, sir, in the presence of these witnesses."

"Well, curse it, you shall not scare me off," jerking paper and pencil from his pockets. "I'll give you my name for the five thousand, just for the satisfaction of seeing what you are betting on."

With trembling fingers he wrote the required words, flinging the paper down upon the center of the table when he had done.

"There," he cried, "show down your hand!"

This the cashier did, promptly, disclosing three jacks and a small pair.

"Curse the luck!" cried the mine-owner. "Just big enough to beat me, and no more. Here I held three tens and a brace of aces!"

With an immense expression of relief upon his face, Terrell drew in his winnings, and the deal passed to Bergman, who took the cards with trembling hands, his face pale.

"If a man can't win something on his own deal," he said, "he had better drop cards for good and all."

"I hope you do not mean to insinuate that I did not deal fairly?" Terrell, queried, in an angry mood.

"Not at all; I did not catch you doing otherwise."

"Let me know it when you do."

"You'll never do it a second time, with me," grimly.

"I'll never be found guilty of doing it the first time, Mr. Bergman. I am a square player."

The mine-owner dealt out the cards, slowly and carefully, and without the least showing of any attempt at crooked work, and the players took up their hands and looked at them.

"I am well satisfied with what you have given me, sir," announced Terrell.

"The same here," chimed in Clancy.

It was not so with the Five-Spot Sport. He threw down his cards and called for a new hand altogether.

The play began, and when it came around to Terrell he coolly dropped a cold ten thousand dollars into the pot, looking at Bergman as if to say—"Come and see me if you dare!"

"Curse you, I know you are bluffing now," cried the mine-owner. "I'll take some of it out of you, by Jericho!"

Bringing forth his paper and pencil again, he wrote his I. O. U. for fifty thousand dollars!

The Five-Spot Sport and Clancy dropped their cards as if they were hot.

"I don't want that," observed Deuce-Trey.

"Nor I," chimed in Clancy.

"That is a good big slice of the Squint-eye Mine, I take it," remarked Terrell. "It will take about my whole pile to call you."

"Put up or shut up!" cried Bergman, impatiently.

"Oh, I mean to put up, don't fear! I'll put it on paper, same as yours, and my name is good for about that amount."

This was done, and the mine-owner was required to show his cards.

He had made a clean bluff; he had only a small pair.

Terrell held four treys.

"Ha! ha! ha!" the cashier laughed. "It did not work that time, Mr. Bergman. If you will be reckless you must not squeal."

The mine-owner's face was now like death, and the perspiration on his forehead showed the intensity of his excitement.

"No man can say he ever heard Sam Bergman squeal," he declared. "I'll make you squeal, though, before we are done with this thing. Deal up, Deuce-Trey, and we'll try it again."

"I guess you and I are not in this thing, Mr. Clancy," the Five-Spot Sport made remark, as he shuffled.

"That is the way it looks," was the response.

The cards were dealt.

At first the betting was light, but it grew heavier, between Clancy and Terrell, and Bergman and the Five-Spot Sport dropped out.

"I seem to have got in it, at last," remarked Clancy to the sport.

He dropped twenty thousand dollars on the board!

Quite needless to say that the interest of the crowd was centered upon this table. Every man of them stood silently around, some on chairs and others on tables in order to see over the heads of those who stood on the chairs, and not a word was spoken save by the players.

"And you will find that you have got into a bad place, my friend," remarked Terrell, as he met the bet and ran it up a good deal higher. "If you are bluffing you will find that you have run up against the wrong man, and if not you have got to hold a stiff hand to beat mine."

Clancy said nothing more, but played again.

This time he came down so heavy that it called for Terrell's pile, and with face somewhat pale the bank cashier put it up.

Clancy won, with four eight-spots against three aces and a pair of kings.

"Curse my luck!" growled Terrell. "I guess I am out of it, now."

"No, we'll give you a chance, I guess," Clancy encouraged.

He handed some money back to the broken

clerk, who accepted it with a look of great relief.

The Five-Spot Sport sat apparently only half interested; Clancy, the gambler, was cool and possessed; but Terrell was now excited, and Bergman was nervous and had an expression of desperation.

For a little while the interest was only ordinary; then came what was to be the most exciting play of all.

It came on Clancy's deal.

Terrell threw down his cards in disgust, after drawing three fresh ones. The others had made no change, except Deuce-Trey, who took one card.

Bergman, the mine-owner, opened the fight by putting up all his remaining interest in the Squint-eye Mine, saying to Clancy as he did so:

"Now, call me if you dare! If you raise it, I'll put up my coat, hat and boots, and everything else I've got in the world. But, are you going to stay in, Mr. Five-Spot Sport?"

"That is my intention," was the quiet response.

From an inner pocket the sport brought forth a pocketbook, from which he took money enough to pay his way in; then he looked to see what Clancy would do.

"I'm going to raise it fifty thousand dollars higher," the gambler informed them. "That is too much for you, Mr. Bergman, but if you want to call me you can put up your daughter's hand in marriage against it."

"And I'll do it, by Jericho!" the mine-owner cried, desperately. "Here, I'll put that in writing for you," making haste to pencil the promise, which he dashed down upon the table as soon as written. "There, confound you, now let me see what you have got!"

But the Five-Spot Sport was yet to be heard from.

CHAPTER V.

GOING FOR THE SPORT.

CLANCY now showed a little of excitement, spite of the fact that he was a professional.

For some time he had been trying to win the hand of pretty Lillie Bergman, the mine-owner's daughter, but without success.

Here, now, was his chance, at last, to force what he had not been able to get by favor. Little wonder that he could not quite conceal the excitement he felt.

As for the crowd, every man was almost breathless.

Clancy looked at Deuce-Trey.

"Are you out of it?" he asked nervously.

"Well, hardly, though I have not the amount of your raise in cold cash."

"It is cash or nothing, now!" cried the gambler, excitedly. "If you can't put it up, drop out."

"Thank you, but I am in it, as I have said. I'll put up what cash I have, and my name for the balance, for I am well able to back up my—"

"Your name is no good here," asserted Clancy, eager to force the sport out of the contest. "You are a stranger and nobody knows anything about you—in fact, you seem to have no name. Money talks!"

"And so does this," was the cool rejoinder, as the sport brought a five-shot revolver to bear to back up his argument. "I'll put up what money I have, and call you, and you have got to let me stay in; that's one of the rules of poker. If you win you take my pile."

"But, Mr. Bergman's stake was put up against my bet, and you cannot claim that—"

"Beg your pardon, sir, but if I win this pot I take everything it holds. Mr. Bergman knew I was still in the game when he made his remarkable offer."

"Then you mean to force—"

"I mean to have my rights in this thing, sir. I am in to stay, and there are just five

spots in this gun that say so! The Five-Spot Sport is not to be bullied out of his rights, you bet!"

Clancy had to "take water," but there was a dark look on his face.

Deuce-Trey dropped his pocketbook upon the pile in the center of the board, and looked to learn what cards the gambler held.

There was nothing left for Clancy to do but to show down, and this he did, but not with all confidence that he held the winning hand. In fact, his face was the picture of anxiety.

He let fall his cards, face up.

They were four queens and a king, and at sight of them Bergman dropped back in his chair with a muttered oath.

A look of exultation instantly lighted up Clancy's face, and he turned instantly to the Five-Spot Sport, eagerly demanding:

"Can you beat it?"

For answer, Deuce-Trey showed his hand—four aces and a jack!

The crowd instantly drew a breath of relief, and one man among them proposed three cheers for the Five-Spot Sport.

The cheers were given with a will, while the men sprung down from the chairs and tables upon which they had been perched, and the sport and Clancy had risen to their feet.

Clancy was glaring at Deuce-Trey as if he would like to rend him.

The Five-Spot Sport had one hand on his winnings, while the other still held his five-shot revolver.

"Well, what do you mean to do, sir?" he demanded, as soon as he could make himself heard. "Do you acknowledge that I have won fairly?"

"You have won," the gambler admitted, "but I won't swear how fair it was."

"It was upon your own dealing, sir."

"I'll toss off with you, for that bit of paper against every dollar I am worth in the world."

"Which may be a very meager sum. No, thank you; I prefer to keep my prize, and now I am naturally eager to see what manner of lady my future wife is. I may be willing to sell out after I have seen her."

"No fear o' that," cried Fire-eater Flip. "Little Bergman is ther finest bit o' calico this hyer camp ever seen."

"Ha! glad to hear it. If that is the case I'll hold fast to my claim. No disrespect to your daughter, Mr. Bergman."

"I'm glad you have won, sir," declared the broken mine-owner.

"Yet I'm a stranger to you."

"Which this other man isn't."

With an oath Clancy gathered up what money he had left, while Deuce-Trey was gathering up his winnings.

"I wish you luck with your prize, anyhow," the gambler remarked. "That bit of paper is one thing, but I imagine the young lady will have something to say about it, for all."

"That will be between her and me," Deuce-Trey calmly answered.

The game was at an end for the night, and a glance at the clock showed that it was after midnight.

Not a sound came from without, and now that the excitement within was over, and the intense strain removed, it was noticeable in great contrast with the noise of the storm as it was again recalled.

"Hello! is the storm over?" cried Henry Hurston.

All glanced toward the windows for the answer, and great was their surprise at what they saw.

Every window was a solid blank of white. "Snowed under, by thunder!" cried Ben Banty, the handy man around the saloon.

"You are right, fer a drink," echoed Fire-eater Flip. "Hyar we have got ter stay fer the remainder of this night, ef not fer a good deal longer."

"How is ther fuel, Ben?" asked another.

"Got lots of that," was the reply. "Got half a cellar full."

"Then we ar' all right in that respect. How is ther whisky, Buck Williams?"

"Plenty of it."

"Then we ar' all hunk. Let 'er snow ef it wants to; we kin hold ther fort till it is over, I reckon."

"But, this will hinder me from getting home," urged Samuel Bergman, anxiously. "Lillie is all alone, save for the colored woman, and she will be greatly worried if she is awake."

He stepped to the door and opened it.

Nothing but a white wall of snow was there, with the imprint of the door upon it.

"Durn me ef et ain't purty serious," declared Williams. "This hyer is ther deepest snow we have had this season, an' no tellin' when we will git out of it."

"Well, no need to worry," added Hurston, "for Grudge & Higgins have got in a good store of supplies, and we are safe against being starved. There's nothing to be done but to make ourselves comfortable."

"I guess you are right," agreed Bergman. "I wish I had another stake to put up, we'd have another game."

"We had better have a game at sleep, I am thinking," suggested the Five-Spot Sport.

"Easy enough for you to say, now that you are flush."

"You are right," cried Clancy. "By the way, Hurston, are we going to allow this stranger to come here and clean us up as he has done?"

"Don't see what's the use of crying about it, now that it is done," was the philosophical response.

"I mean, are we going to let him get away with our wealth?"

"No danger of my getting away with anything, I guess, by the looks of things out there," assured Deuce-Trey.

"We don't know him," declared Clancy, "and the question has been raised as to whether or not he isn't the runaway cashier from Arizona. I for one don't feel like giving up so easy."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded the sport.

Clancy and Terrell had been holding a hurried whispered consultation.

"You should have been debarred from the games."

"You were willing to take some of my money if you could get at it."

"The money does not matter so much, but here you have fleeced Mr. Bergman completely."

"Bergman can take care of his own matters," that gentleman spoke up. "I am not squealing yet, George Clancy. Plead your own case, but leave mine out of it, if you please."

"All right, sir; but, here is this fellow a stranger, holding your written consent to his marriage with your daughter."

"And you heard what I had to say about that, did you not?"

"Well, if you are willing to give up, we are not," said Clancy, he and Terrell drawing their weapons simultaneously. "Up with your hands, stranger, for we mean to know more about you before we let you get away with our pile, you can bet on that!"

CHAPTER VI.

DEUCE-TREY'S TRADE-MARK.

"If you are robbers here, why did you not proceed to rob me at once on my arrival?" demanded the Five-Spot Sport.

He had made no attempt at drawing his own weapons, though a quick man would have had time enough to do so. He stood with folded arms and looked at the two men facing him.

"We are not robbers, though," retorted

Clancy. "We are merely demanding what is our own."

"And we arrest you on suspicion that you are Howard Smithy," added Terrell.

"Well, in the first place, I have nothing belonging to either of you, and in the second place I am not Howard Smithy. If you have any proof to the contrary, just bring it out."

"You have our money," growled Clancy.

"Nothing of the kind, sir. It is my money, now. I risked mine against yours in play, and if chance had favored you I would have been without a dollar now, almost."

"That's right," spoke up Fire-eater Flip, "that's right."

"Do you call it a square deal, boys?" demanded the sport. "Was it not a fair game, all the way through?"

"You bet et was!" was the shout.

The Five-Spot Sport had fixed the big majority all right by his treat earlier in the evening.

"Still, if you are determined to have further satisfaction," the sport continued, addressing his foes, "I'll tell you what I'll do."

"What will you do?"

"I'll separate my original money from my winnings, and we'll shoot off for the balance; best shot to take the pile. Are you pretty good with the revolver? What do you say?"

"That's fair enough," shouted Ben Banty, eager for the new fun.

"Do you mean to put up that mortgage on the girl's hand, too?" demanded the gambler.

"Not by a good deal, sir."

"Then we won't hear to any such arrangement. Up with your hands, now, or suffer the consequence."

Everything seemed to favor these two confederates, just then.

The sport was apart from the rest of the crowd, between them and the door that opened into the kitchen.

The crowd was on the right, where they had gone to look at the snow when the door was opened—it was open yet, by the way; and the two men with guns in hand held the center.

Deuce-Trey raised his hands, seeming in no hurry about it, but as they came up, it was noted that a five-shooter had leaped to each!

"Now, then, blaze away!" he invited.

Never in the world were two men more amazed than were George Clancy and Rob Terrell just then.

And, in the same moment, the door opening into the kitchen was flung open and Chin Shang, the Chinaman, sprang in, and took his place beside the sport, he having also a gun to the fore!

"Allee samee me too!" he ejaculated hurriedly. "'Melican tleat Chin Shang all light; Chin Shang stand by 'Melican man every time, you bettee!"

The crowd had made a hasty scramble toward the end of the room, to get out of the way of chance stray bullets, for it certainly looked as if there was going to be a battle.

"What are you going to do about it?" demanded the Five-Spot Sport.

"You are our prisoner," declared Terrell, but not with so bold an air as he had been wearing.

"Your prisoner? Ha! ha! ha! That is pretty good, I must say. How long have I been your prisoner, I would like to know? Put up your guns, now, or we'll open fire and have some music here!"

"You bettee!"

Clancy dropped his arm with an oath and returned his gun to his pocket.

Seeing that he was alone, then, Terrell did the same, and the Five-Spot Sport and his Chinese friend held the floor.

"I am no man's prisoner, yet," assumed Deuce-Trey; "and, what is more, I am not going to be, either, without a fight for it.

Just step aside from between me and that door, please."

He motioned with his revolver, and Clancy and Terrell stepped to the left.

No sooner had they done so than the sport's weapons began to bark, and five shots were fired in rapid succession.

He had fired straight at the open door, and all wondered what it meant, but in the next moment, when they surged forward to see, they saw as it were his trade-mark there in the white wall of snow!

There were five holes, appearing like black spots on the stainless snow, arranged in perfect order like this:

* *
*
*

"There you have it," the sport declared, as cool as ice. "That is merely to show you that I can shoot a little bit, so you will know what kind of a snag you are running against."

He proceeded coolly to reload the empty chambers in his guns as he spoke.

Terrell whispered a word to Clancy in that moment, and as one man both made a spring forward upon the sport together.

They had hold upon him before he could move to defend himself.

"Whose prisoner are you now, Howard Smithy?" demanded Terrell, exultingly. "I guess you will find that—"

"That I am all alive yet!" finished the sport, as he roused to action.

But, the Chinese was not idle. He leaped forward and pulled at Clancy, and the crowd was turning, with angry growls.

With a sudden movement, just how it was done no man could rightly tell, the Five-Spot Sport sent Terrell headlong into the bank of snow in the open doorway, and turned immediately to seize Clancy.

The Chinese was still clinging to him, but he let go as soon as he saw what the sport's intention was.

Seizing him, Deuce-Trey, lifting him up bodily and whirling him over his head, sent him head-first after Terrell.

How the crowd whooped!

There they were, buried in the snow, with only their boots and a portion of their legs visible!

"Who will take a drink at my expense?" asked the sport, as if nothing had happened.

The crowd as before made a dive for the bar, cheering as they did so.

The sport tossed another coin to the proprietor.

"Those fellows will have your life for this, sir," said Bergman, with some concern.

"Not if they give me half a chance for it," averred the sport, with assurance, "I'll have a word to say to the boys about them, when they get out of their cold bath."

"You bettee not while Chin Shang is around, allee samee!" cried the Chinese. "Me puttee bullet into 'em quickee, they go to play any ticks on my flieed."

"Much obliged to you, John," and the sport bowed approvingly.

"Heapee welcome!"

By this time Clancy had floundered out of the snow, and Terrell followed him immediately.

The Five-Spot Sport was waiting for them, gun in hand, and as soon as they were upon their feet he held them up short, saying:

"Now, you fellows, I want to give you a bit of advice: Don't you ever try that trick on with me again, or you won't come out with whole skins, I warn you. And you, boys, give attention."

"You bet!" from the crowd.

"If anything happens to me here, you know who my only enemies are. Bring them up to account for it, if you happen to

find me with my toes turned up. I'll let them off this time, but if they ever jump me again it will be their death-signal, I give due notice."

At that moment the top of the bank of snow caved in, tumbling down into the room, and a gust of wind following it proved that the storm still raged.

The snow was cleared up and pushed out, as much as possible, and the door was closed.

"Well, landlord, good-night," said the Five-Spot Sport. "I have made friends with your Chinese, and he has promised to make me up a good bunk in his domain. You, Fire-eater, look well to my horse; I trust him to you."

"I'll do that, pard, you bet!"

With a wave of the hand, then, Deuce-Trey followed the Chinese out of the room into the kitchen, leaving his two enemies to plot against him at pleasure.

CHAPTER VII.

CHIN SHANG'S STRANGE STORY.

THE Five-Spot Sport closed the door, and he and the Chinese—as we have continued to call him—sat down by the fire.

"I invented that little piece of fiction in order to get a chance to talk with you," explained the sport. "You have awakened my interest and I want to hear your story."

"It was no fiction, as you can see," speaking in low tone, and the pretending Chinese pointed across the room to a place where he had arranged a couple of beds, an extra one besides his own. "I have prepared a bunk for you, and meant to ask you to accept it."

"It seems we both thought of the same scheme, then."

"Yes."

"Well, your story. What have you got to say to me?"

"I have nothing to say to you, until you have acknowledged that you are the person I have taken you to be."

"And you take me to be Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"I do."

"Then you have seen Deadwood Dick?"

"I have."

"Where and when?"

"In Silver City, two years or so ago."

"Yes, I was there about that time. Well, my friend, I am Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"I felt sure that I was not mistaken. But I wanted your word for it before I trusted you too far."

"And my word is all the proof you have got; I may be lying to you."

"Oh, no, you are mistaken. I have plenty of proof, now. I have seen an exhibition of your strength and courage, to say nothing about your shooting. Besides, you told me some one else had recognized you for Deadwood Dick."

"I guess you have got a good case against me, John—I'll have to call you that till you see fit to give me your real name."

"My name is Frank Douglas."

"I'll remember it."

"But, who was it recognized you?"

"It was the man who calls himself Robert Terrell."

"You speak as if you do not believe that to be his true name?"

"Well, I can't swear that it is. You see a man wears his real name like he wears a b'iled shirt; and that is, when it best suits his purpose. What do you think about the gentleman?"

"I have given him no thought. My mind has been taken up with another."

"Yes? Who is that?"

"Samuel Bergman."

"What is the matter with Samuel?"

"Nothing, apparently; the matter is with me."

"Well, then, what is the matter with you? You told me you wanted my help."

"And so I do. I have a mystery on my hands that I am trying to solve, but it is too heavy for me, I am afraid."

"You are a mystery, Mr. Douglas. Any one would swear that you are a Chinese, sure enough. You are made up to perfection. Are you a professional detective?"

"Bless you, no! But, I have been an actor in my day, and am at home in almost any sort of make-up. I adopted this, in coming here, because I wanted to remain completely unknown to Bergman."

"I see. You seem to be loaded for bear, then, and this man Bergman is your game."

"No, his daughter."

"Hal!"

"If she is his daughter—and now I have additional proof that she is not!"

"This grows in interest, Mr. Douglas. I have a claim upon that lady myself, now, as maybe you are aware."

"Yes; and that is the very thing I speak of as proof. Do you think any man would put up his own flesh and blood as a stake at cards, like he put up his daughter's hand in marriage?"

"All men are not alike. Some men will do anything, particularly when on the losing side in a desperate game."

"Maybe so; but I don't believe any man would do that."

"Who, then, is this Lillie Bergman, if she is not the child of Samuel Bergman?"

"She is Delia Douglas, my own daughter!"

"Whew! Worse and worse complicated! Don't you know whether she is your child or not?"

"I can swear that she is, sir, but I cannot prove it."

"And that is what you require of me—help to prove it?"

"That's what I want."

"It may be more of a job than I can accomplish, if you have been unable to do it yourself."

"Deadwood Dick, Junior, can succeed where other men fail utterly. I believe you can clear up this mystery for me, if any man in the world can."

"Well, I hope so; but that remains to be seen, my friend."

"I am glad that you have a claim upon the girl; I was dreadfully afraid Clancy would win that time."

"Yes, I am glad of that, too. I don't like the looks of the fellow a whole lot—so to say, and I think such a weapon in his hand would be bad for the girl. How old is she?"

"She has just turned nineteen."

"Does she know whether she is your daughter or Bergman's?"

"There is more mystery, sir. She laughed in my face when I came here openly and asserted my claim, some weeks ago."

"And how long since you saw your daughter? You see, you have not given me the facts in the case yet. Was she a child when you lost her—if that was it? Give me the particulars."

"She was about fifteen years old when she was suddenly missing, and I never saw her again or heard tell of her until I found her, by chance, in the possession of this man Bergman. And she is my child; I can swear to it; look at this picture, and then decide when you have seen her."

The pretending Chinaman produced a photograph from under his blouse.

Dick—needless longer to deny his identity—took it and looked at it critically.

"A very pretty child," he commented. "I can easily imagine the changes which four years would naturally bring to such a girl, and I am prepared to recognize Miss Bergman, if things are as you think."

"And you will be willing to swear it is the

same person, I am sure. But, to prove it—there is the rub."

"Was there any reason why Bergman should steal your child?"

"None that I know of, sir."

"And any reason why your child should deny you, as her father?"

"Even less."

"Well, here is a riddle with a vengeance. But, I am flopping around in the dark, Mr. Douglas. Give me the particulars before we take another step, and while you are doing so I will straighten out my money and stow it away. Can you lock that door there?"

The disguised man stepped to the door and secured it.

Dick took his money from his pockets, then, where he had hastily put it, and began to sort it out, and while he did so he paid particular attention to each bill of that which had recently come into his possession. And while he was thus engaged his companion told his story, more at length than we shall quote it.

"I was married twenty years ago," the narrator began. "My wife was a mystery to me from the hour of our wedding. She was away from home about as much as she was at home, but always at her mother's house when absent. My employ as a traveling actor, with very irregular places, gave her some excuse for this. I found no fault. At length, at the end of a year, our little girl was born—at my wife's mother's."

"This was some distance from my own home, to which I had taken my wife immediately after our marriage, and in order to go to see her on the occasion of this event I had to get relieved from engagement. You can understand how it was. I spent a couple of days there, and then returned to the company, at the same time preparing things at home for the welcome reception of my wife and baby as soon as she was able to join me there. I never saw my wife again!"

"She died?"

"Not so. She disappeared—disappeared as utterly as if the earth had opened and taken her in, as we often hear said. Strangest of all, she left the baby—proof, I thought, that she had not purposely deserted me—and I knew of no reason why she should do that. Her mother knew nothing about it and almost went wild with grief; and you can imagine, perhaps, the state of mind I was in. Every effort was made to find my wife, but all in vain, and from that day to this I have never seen her. Where she went to has always been and always will be a mystery. I had my child, however, and for fifteen years she was the idol of my heart."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAMP SNOWED UNDER.

At this point in the man's narration his voice grew husky, and he passed the back of his hand over his eyes.

Deadwood Dick, Junior's, sympathy went out to him, for it was evident that the man was deeply moved by the recital of these events of the past.

"Yours is about as strange a story as I ever listened to, sir," said Dick, with evident feeling, during the pause the man made.

"Truth is ever stranger than fiction, sir," the response.

"And you had no clue to the mystery of your missing wife?"

"Not the slightest clue, sir. She was gone; that was the only thing we know about her."

"You had no enemy at that time, who would put her out of the way, or steal her away from you, out of revenge?"

"Hadn't an enemy in the word, to my knowledge."

"Had she any such?"

"No."

"Have I asked you if you had a rival for

her hand? Were there other lovers in the field?"

"She had admirers many, for she was a good-looking girl, but her mother gave me the assurance that I was the only favored one. It is useless to try to find a clue; I have spent years in trying to find one."

"I guess you are right, at this late day. What concerns us now is this later mystery, the disappearance of your daughter."

"Which was just as mysterious as the disappearance of the mother. But, let me finish my story."

"Yes, proceed."

"Well, as I said, for fifteen years she was the idol of my heart. I kept my home, having a housekeeper, and Delia grew up under my eye. We loved each other dearly, and I made everything of my child—the same as I appeared to be everything to her. I educated her, and she was still attending school when she disappeared."

"That was about four years ago. She was suddenly gone, and not a trace was to be found of her, search as I would. It almost drove me mad. When I was forced to acknowledge it useless to search further, at home, I sold out my place of business—for I had dropped out of theatrical service long since; and then I began to wander from place to place, hoping to find her by chance."

"With little chance in your favor, I should say."

"So I thought; finally, in Virginia City, I found my child, and caught her to my breast with delight. It was on the open street; but, what was my amazement to have her give me a slap, and scream for help in a way that was startling. I was amazed, and tried to claim her as my daughter, but she refused to recognize me, and then I was told that her name was Lillie Bergman, and that she was the daughter of Samuel Bergman, a man who had been a resident of Virginia City for about three years. I was balked, but I held on."

"Well, I thought it over, and the more I thought the more I was convinced that I had made no mistake. Hadn't I ought to know my own child? There was no room for a mistake, and I followed the man here, again pressing my claim, but I was driven out and laughed to scorn. My child declared she had never seen me in her life before that day in Virginia City. So what could I do? I went away, but I was soon back again, in this disguise, and here I have been since, hoping for something to turn up that will help me out. There, sir, you have the whole matter, and now let me ask you what you think of it?"

Deadwood Dick had listened with absorbed attention.

"It is about the most remarkable story I ever heard," he declared. "It is a strange feature that your wife and child should both have disappeared in the same mysterious way."

"Strange, indeed."

"Have you any theory to advance in explanation?"

"None."

"And you have not the shadow of a doubt but that this Lillie Bergman is your daughter, you say?"

"I am sure of it."

"Have you any proof—but, you said you had none."

"Just look again at that photograph, Deadwood Dick, and notice particularly the chin."

Dick complied.

"I see," he said; "a peculiar double dimple—something I never saw before, to my recollection."

"That is it, and Lillie Bergman has the same chin. Oh, there can be no doubt of it—and yet, why will she not recognize me, when she loved me as she did? I was the light of her life, I thought."

"Had your child a lover?"

"No."

"Well, we may as well give it up for the present. I will do what I can in the matter, Mr. Douglas, and maybe we'll be able to get some light upon the subject. I'll help you, and at the same time I'll be glad to have your backing, for I am here alone and single-handed."

"No need of your asking for that, for you have it already."

"You will continue in your disguise, of course, and you must not forget that I am Deuce-Trey, the Five-Spot Sport."

"I'll not give you away, trust me for that."

Dick had by this time finished with his money and papers, and now arranged the different packages he had made in different pockets.

"You will not allow that paper to go out of your possession, I trust," said Douglas.

"Most assuredly not, sir. It is the first time I have ever held a mortgage of that peculiar kind, and I value it highly."

They had talked in tones so low that it was impossible that they could have been overheard, and now, after some further passing observations, they sought their bunks.

Next morning they were the first awake.

The saloon was as still as a tomb, save that no tomb ever echoed such mellifluous snoring as was heard in the adjoining room.

Deuce-Trey and the Chinese opened the door and looked in upon the sleepers, as they were sitting and lying in almost every conceivable position, on the chairs, the tables, the bar and the floor.

The fire was burning low, most of the lamps were out, and the air was by no means fresh.

The Five-Spot Sport crossed the room to the door and opened it.

Nothing there but snow.

The storm had filled again the hole that had been made by the cave-in, and it looked as if the saloon was literally snowed under.

Chin Shang brought a stick several feet in length, with which he poked upward into the white mass, but as far as he could reach he could not find any outlet, not even when he stood upon a chair.

Just then Buck Williams awoke.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "what's the racket?"

"Allee samee no lacket," answered the Chinese. "Time to gittee up."

"Don't know but you aire right, Chin, and you'll have a hungry lot to get breakfast for, too."

"Allee samee eatee us clean out," was the rejoinder. "Better you tellee them go homee gittee own glub."

"Not a bad idea, but they can't do it. We'll have to tunnel, and it will take the whole forenoon to get around the camp."

The proprietor's first exclamation had awakened others, and he now gave a yell that caused a general stir and the sleepers began to scramble to their feet.

About the only thing they could tell, without, was that it was daylight, and this they told by the whiter appearance of the snow overhead, from the doorway. And it was thought that the storm was over.

"We must be under a drift," the Five-Spot Sport concluded. "If it is like this on the level, what must the drift be?"

"It's all drifts in these hyer hills, in a snow like this," averred Fire-eater Flip.

And that expressed it just about right, by the way.

Somebody began the business of the day by calling for a drink at the bar, an eye-opener as he called it, and for a little while Williams was kept busy while the cook brightened up his fire for breakfast.

There was not enough food in the saloon to prepare for such a horde, but after a time all had been supplied with a cup of coffee at

least, and it was then that they set about making preparations to tunnel the camp, as they called it; but first they desired to ascertain the depth of the snow.

This was accomplished, finally, and it was found that the drift right in front of the Cocktail was twenty feet deep at least!

It was a startling discovery, and every man felt thankful that Grudge & Higgins had just laid in a store of provisions.

CHAPTER IX.

GRUDGE & HIGGINS'S CORNER.

THE work of tunneling was commenced forthwith.

It was not done with shovels, for there were not more than two of these to be had in the saloon, and one of those were broken.

The men simply pushed their way into the mass, packing it on either side and above, as they advanced, thus slowly but surely making a hole through it in the direction of the store.

It was thought that this was the most important tunnel, and they would make this one first, for upon their reaching the store depended their dinner.

As all could not work in this one tunnel, however, others were begun, and of these, one in the direction of Samuel Bergman's cottage, in the opposite direction from the first.

It was slow work, and yet the first-named tunnel was pushed forward quite rapidly, all things considered.

The men in this hole had been at work about an hour, when they broke through into an open.

It proved to be another tunnel, and just ahead of them was a man.

"Ha! dhe top av dhe marnin' to yez!"

So the lone worker exclaimed, and he was recognized instantly by the brogue on his tongue.

It would have been next to impossible to recognize him in any other manner, for he, like the others, was one mass of snow.

"It's Shamus McCall," said the foremost of the workers in the main tunnel, as they all stopped for a moment. "Where are you going, Shamus?"

"Oi am going to the store, begorra, an Oi can foind it, d'ye moind," was the answer given. "It is dhe divil's own snowstorm dhis is, to be sure. Oi have company at me shanty, and divil a whit to ate at all at all."

"Company, Shamus?"

"Dhat same was phwat I said."

"And what are you doin' with company?"

"It is feeding av thim Oi want to be doing, begob."

"Who are they?"

"Two female critters dhat came to me dhure last noight almost perished wid dhe could—a mother and her daughter, I be-lave."

"And ye took them in, hey? Well, that was the right thing to do, I allow. But, no time to chin, boys. On to the store is the word, and on we go, like so many durn prairie dogs!"

And on they went, working with a will.

Finally they broke through into an opening of considerable extent, and before them was the door of the store.

A space some twenty feet square had been shoveled out, about ten feet in height, the snow having been removed somewhere—probably it had been carried into the store and thrown into the rear cellar.

But, this was not all.

On the door of the store was a notice, in big letters, like this:

A DOLLAR A POUND

ALL AROUND

CASH.

"T'under an' turf!" ejaculated the Irishman, the first one to sight it.

"What's the matter, Shamus?" asked the others.

They looked, and a howl of indignation went up immediately.

"Ther blamed thieves!" roared one man. "They have got a corner on everything, an' they mean to make."

They had guessed the situation at once.

Grudge & Higgins were a pair of hard-fisted fellows, and they had recognized this as their chance to scoop a fortune.

Up long before any one else in the camp, they had cleaned a space before the door of their establishment, put up the notice, and were now within awaiting customers at the named rate.

Not only so, but they were prepared for trouble as well.

They had cut some loop-holes on each side of the door through which they could use their guns if it became necessary.

"Hillo! Grudge! Higgins!"

So one fellow sung out.

"Hello!" came the answer from Grudge.

"Come, open up, there; we want to get some rations."

"We are open fer business, boys; come up one at a time and say what you want, and we'll hand it out."

"You'll hand it out! Dol game yer ugly pictur's, what's ther matter with openin' up ther same as usual? We ain't no dogs, ter have rations handed out to us, by thunder!"

"Well, that's our rule this mornin'."

"An' do ye mean ter say that everything is a dollar a pound?"

"That is the price, to make it fair to everybody, an' you kin buy or leave et alone."

The men who had worked so hard to reach the store looked at one another like a lot of whipped coyotes at bay, and knew not what to say.

"Be hivvins, it is robbers ye are!" cried Shamus McCall.

"Wuss'n hoss thieves!" added another man.

"We can't help it," declared Grudge. "We have put on our price, and it is going to stand."

"But, you will starve us out in less than a week," argued one honest miner. "We ain't got ther dust to stand no sech racket as that."

"That is your misfortune, then. We have only got just so much stock, and it has got to be made to go just as far as it will. If we sell at the old prices you'll eat it up in no time."

"Dhen it is out ov charity ye are puttin' up dhe price, is it?" demanded McCall.

"Look at it any way you please," was the reply.

"Well, begob, robbery or no robbery, Oi have company at home and must have some-thin' to ate, so here goes."

With that Shamus produced his money pouch and advanced to the door, where he made his purchases and came away again, while the crowd stood and debated the situation.

"How much did you spend, Shamus?" one man asked.

"Six dollars, allana," the answer.

"And what did ye git?"

"A pound av coffee, a pound av sugar, a pound av pork and three av flour—too much fur dhe money, begorra!"

There was a howl when this information was given, and the door of the store was closed in haste.

Shamus made his way toward home through the tunnel, and the others presently followed his example, returning to the saloon.

Of these, one was Ben Banty, Williams's handy man.

"Where's the grub?" the proprietor of the Cocktail demanded, seeing his man come in empty handed.

"Grub nothin'!" growled Banty.

"What's ther matter?"

"Ther grub is out o' sight, that's all; a dollar a pound all around. You didn't give me money enough to buy grub fer a sick man."

The situation was explained forthwith, and the indignation of the citizens of Whoop-up hardly knew bounds. They swore by all their gods that they would go down and lynch the two skinnners,

And they went without delay.

Whereas there had been only a dozen or so at first, there were now thirty or forty, and when they reached the store they filled the space in front.

The leading citizen of the camp, undoubtedly, was Henry Hurston the banker and he stepped up to the door and demanded admission.

"What do you want?" was asked.

"I want this door opened, that's what, and goods sold at the usual price. The people of Whoop-up demand it."

"Well, the people of Whoop-up kin go to blazes, and you along with 'em. We are open fer business, and our price is on the door. If you want to buy, say what you want."

And there they were.

The two storekeepers held the fort, and a couple of guns through the loopholes proved that they held something else besides.

The people of Whoop-up were in a bad situation, truly. Not only were they snowed under, but they were likely to be starved out as well; two men had their fate in their hands.

After some parley, the crowd withdrew and returned to the saloon, where they proceeded to hold a council of war—for war it must be, and now for the first time the Five-Spot Sport took a hand in the affairs of the camp. Just how it would terminate remained to be seen.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIVE-SPOT SPORT'S SCHEME.

THE Five-Spot Sport, however, took no part till invited to do so.

He had been holding back, to this time, as if not wanting to put in his voice in the affairs of the camp.

"What do you say about it, Deuce-Trey?" demanded Samuel Bergman. "You are as silent as if you had no interest at stake. You are in the same boat with us. Can't you help us out?"

"Hardly know whether my advice would be worth anything or not," the sport responded. "I did not want to chip in until I was consulted, for I thought you might think I was taking too much upon myself. I don't approve of your line of attack, to begin with."

"You don't? why not?"

"Somebody is bound to get hurt."

"Well, won't somebody get hurt, anyhow? We have got to have food, and this camp can't afford to buy at that rate."

"But, those two fellows hold the fort, as it were, and there is only one point of attack, which is the space they have cleared away in front. They could pick you off at pleasure."

"Then what ther doose is ter be done?" cried Buck Williams.

"Let us first consider what is not to be done. Some one here has suggested burning them out. That will never do, for you would burn up the store of provisions at the same time."

"That's so, that's so!"

"No fire, boys, no fire; ther sport's head is level!"

"And then it will not do to besiege them too hard, for if they find they are losing they can spoil their goods in five minutes."

"Then what in ther durnation is goin' to be done?" cried Fire-eater Flip.

"We must use strategy, my Christian friend."

"That's easy ter say."

"And it is not impossible to carry it out, provided we go about it in the right manner."

"There is sense in what the sport says, boys," said Henry Hurston. "Let us hear your plan, Sir Sport, and we'll lend our aid in carrying it out. If we can outwit the rascals, so much the better."

"Well, a small crowd, say a dozen or fifteen men, must remain in front of the store and keep up a demonstration, to hold the storekeepers to their post of guard, and at the same time let others go and buy, as things are needed, thus keeping their suspicion from being aroused."

"Good enough, good enough!"

"In the mean time, others must bore an other tunnel around to the rear of their store—I suppose there is some way of getting in from that direction?"

"Hooray! That is ther idee! We have got 'em now, Deuce-Trey, and you kin bet high on it. If we don't make 'em sick of this job it will be funny. But, et will be no fool job to go in an' tackle 'em."

"I'll attend to that part of it," promised the Five-Spot Sport. "You get me into the place and I'll do the rest."

"Allee samee me helpee 'Melican man, he lettee me," spoke up Chin Shang.

"All right, John, if you want to," agreed the sport. "You are a pretty clever heathen, and those soft shoes of yours will come right into play."

"You bettee."

So it was arranged.

A dozen men were sent to the store to keep up the appearance of hostilities, others went to make purchases, and at the same time still others commenced work on the new branch tunnel.

In the mean time Samuel Bergman was anxious to reach his cottage, and was urging the men to hurry with the tunnel in that direction.

He put his hand to his pocket to consult his watch.

"Thunder!" he ejaculated. "I have lost my ticker!"

"What's that?" asked Hurston.

"My watch is gone."

Hurston felt for his own, and that, too, was missing.

"What does this mean?" he angrily demanded. "I had my watch in my pocket last night."

"Yes, by thunder, and so had I!" cried George Clancy. "Heavens! my money is all gone, too, the little I had left. What has been going on here?"

"There is a thief among you, I should say," remarked the Five-Spot Sport.

"Have you lost anything?"

"No; I slept in the kitchen with the Chinaman, you know, and the door was locked."

"Well, who is the thief? Let us get hold of him, and I'll bet he'll swing in a hurry!"

It was an interesting and exciting moment for those present.

There was the Five-Spot Sport, the Chinese, Robert Terrell, Samuel Bergman, Ben Banty, George Clancy, Buck Williams, and several more, and they looked at one another in an inquiring way.

"I venture ter say et ain't none o' us," said Buck Williams.

"Unless et was ther Chinese," one man suggested, looking hard at the supposed Celestial.

"Chin Shang no stealee," declared the Chinaman, earnestly. "Me sleepee in the kitchee, allee same likee Deuce-Trey Sportee. Chin Shang square-toe Chinaman, evely time!"

"Well, we'll find out who it was, by Harry," grated George Clancy.

"And it won't be hard to do, either," put

in Terrell. "We can name every man who was here last night."

And forthwith they began naming them, and a list was made up.

It was plain that some one of the number had played the thief during the time all the rest were sleeping.

But, who was the one?

"How are ye goin' to git at the right man?" questioned the proprietor. "The guilty one has had plenty of time to hide his plunder in the snow, now."

"And most of the men are out, too," added Hurston.

"Well, we'll make an effort to get at the bottom of it, you can bet," cried Terrell. "The man mean enough to do a thing like that is too mean to live."

"I quite agree with you," spoke up the Five-Spot Sport.

"One thing at a time, though," reminded Hurston. "We have got the business of bringing these thieving storekeepers to time, now, or many a man in this camp will go hungry for dinner."

"You are right," agreed Bergman, "and I am likely to be one, for I have been cleaned out completely, as you all know."

"But you have got your prospective son-in-law to lean on," sneered Clancy.

"And he is welcome to lean," spoke up the sport. "I know you refer to me, Mr. Clancy."

"Yes, I refer to you. You may find that your prospects are not so bright after you have seen the fair lady, however. I fancy she'll have something to say."

"Probably; and yet I fancy my chances are as good as yours would have been, had you won the stake. But, no matter, and I prefer to have nothing to say about it further than necessary."

The sport turned away.

Clancy looked after him in a way that showed he had no love for him.

In about half an hour a man came in to report that the rear of the store had been successfully reached.

"Now for business, then," said the Five-Spot Sport. "Keep the interest of the two rascals centered to the front, and I'll do my best to surprise them. Come on, my Chinese ally."

"You bettee, allee samee."

They left the saloon and followed the man who had brought the word, others from the saloon going after them, and everybody was eager to see how the Five-Spot Sport's scheme would work.

The man conducted them through a very narrow tunnel, a mere hole through the snow, to the rear door of the store.

"Have you tried the door?" the sport asked.

"No; didn't venture to touch et."

"That was right. I'll do so now, but of course it's fast."

And of course it was.

"Some of you said something about a cellar," observed the sport. "Is there an outside-door leading into that?"

"Yes, yes, an' et ain't ten feet away from hyer, either."

"That is good; we must try it that way. If they have been putting snow in there, it is quite likely the door leading into it is open, from the store."

This was good reasoning, and the men set about finding the outside doors at once, burrowing their way into the snow and packing it away with their backs, and in due time the doors had been uncovered.

CHAPTER XI.

FORCED TO COME TO TERMS.

Here a new difficulty was encountered.

These doors were secured within, the same as the one leading into the rear of the store.

Deadwood Dick had looked for nothing else, however, and he had a plan in mind by which he hoped to overcome the difficulty.

"This is what I expected, boys," he spoke in guarded tone. "We must lay hold upon them, as many as can, and lift steadily, and something is bound to give way. We must use care to make as little noise as possible, at the same time."

"That's the plan," agreed Hurston. "Lay hold, boys, all together, and then a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull together, and the thing is done. And, even if we are heard, it will weaken the fort just so much, for the two rascals will have to defend two points at once."

"But, no noise if possible," cautioned the Five-Spot Sport.

The men placed themselves along the bottom of the doors, Dick with the rest, and at the word from him they lifted.

At first the doors appeared to be as solid as a rock, but, presently, a slight creaking was heard, then up came the doors and the framework together, and the opening was before them.

"You know the place, Chin?" Dick then asked.

"You bettee!" the response.

"Come on, then!"

But very little noise had been made, thus far, all things considered.

Those who had gone to the front of the building had been instructed to keep up more or less of a racket there constantly.

Their noise, now and then, had come to the ears of those in the rear, through the building, and it was safe to assume that both Grudge and Higgins had their hands full enough.

Deadwood Dick stooped and crept into the opening under the doors, as he uttered the last quoted words, and his ally followed him closely.

It was found that snow had been packed in the cellar, as the citizens had guessed.

The cellar was about half filled with it.

There was room enough to get over it, however, and the Chinese leading the way they soon found the stairs.

Ascending silently, the door at the top was tried, and to his satisfaction the Five-Spot Sport found that it was unfastened and opened readily to his touch, and he looked into the main room.

Douglas stooped and did the same.

Two lamps were burning, and the fire in the stove in the center of the room was blazing brightly.

The two rascally storekeepers, who wanted to take this advantage of their fellow-men and rob them, were at the front door, one on either side, peering out at the shouting crowd.

Dick speedily took in the situation.

On the side nearest to this cellar door ran the counter, and the end was but a few feet away.

The other side of the room was packed with goods, and the counter ran along to the front to within a few feet of the end, or about the same distance as it was from the cellar door.

Waiting a moment, until the noise without was a little louder than usual, Dick pushed open the door and crept out.

His *aide* was right behind him, pushing the door closed again, and they gained the cover of the counter without being discovered and silently crept along behind it.

They were soon at the other end.

Dick waited again for louder noise from the crowd, and then looked out.

The two men had their eyes glued to the loop-holes they had made, and were watching every move that was made.

With his five-shooters in hand, the Five-Spot Sport crept forth as silently as a shadow and placed himself behind Grudge, on the further side of the door, and then looked for Chin Shang.

He had been as quick and as silent in taking his place behind Higgins.

Dick gave the signal, and they rose.

A step forward, then, and simultaneously each gripped the shoulder of his man and poked a gun behind his ear.

"Don't move for your life," hissed Deadwood Dick, savagely. "Give right in, or we'll make cold meat of you in about the quickest time you ever heard of in your lives."

"Allee samee you jest bettee!" echoed the Chinese.

The two rascals had looked around, at the first touch, with a start that almost lost them some buttons.

"Thieves!" ejaculated Grudge.

"Robbers!" echoed his partner Higgins.

"Yes, and you are the very pair," cried Dick, sternly. "Drop those guns, or I'll let go at you at short range!"

He spoke in a way to indicate that he meant what he said, and the two men, cowards at heart anyhow, let fall their guns without further argument.

"Lettee go likee hellee!" supplemented the Chinese, in the same breath, to give weight to the argument.

"A nice pair of fellows you are," said Dick, severely, "to try to take advantage of your fellow-citizens like that. It would serve you right if they locked you up and kept you on short rations the whole time the storm lasted."

"Then you ain't goin' to rob us?" whimpered Higgins.

"It would be the right thing to do, if it wasn't against general principles, you rascal," answered the sport.

"Who are you?" gasped Grudge.

"I am Deuce-Trey, the Five-Spot Sport, and if either of you makes a move toward resistance while this Chinese makes you fast, I'll set these patent perforating machines going, and convert you into porous plasters in about ten seconds. Do you *savvy*?"

"Allee samee better had," the pretending Chinese gave warning.

"You tie their hands, Chin Shang," Dick now directed. "If they resist they will make their demise for the golden shore in the same moment."

The Chinese grinned, and set about his task, and the two rascals made not the slightest attempt to resist, for they were as thoroughly frightened as two men of their size and weight well could be.

In a few minutes both were securely tied; then the Five-Spot Sport opened the door and stepped out into sight.

"Hooray!" cheered the crowd.

"Three yaups fer ther Deuce-Trey, ther Fifteen-Spot Sport!"

And the cheers were given with a right good will, being heard all the way to the Cocktail.

"Thank you, friends," returned the sport, "but please don't change my name. I'm the Five-Spot Sport, not any more."

"Yas, you ar', too," was the shout. "Five on yer bosom an' ten in yer guns!"

And they cheered again.

Their noise apprised those in the rear that the sport had succeeded, for it was plainly heard through the now open building, and they came scrambling up from the cellar in short order.

Chin Shang stood guard over the prisoners.

"Hal got them, did you?" cried Henry Hurston.

"You bettee," was the response. "P'lices come down now."

"Hal ha! ha! Yes, you bet they will, Chin! Where's the sport?"

But it was not necessary to ask, for the banker went right on out and joined him even while asking.

"Here I am," said Deuce-Trey, "and the fort is ours. Now it only remains to put in a couple of good men as clerks, and the

camp can have its supplies at the usual prices."

"Usual prices!" cried the banker. "Every man ought to have goods free, after this trick."

"Oh, no; don't let the people turn robbers themselves."

"Don't rob us," whined Higgins.

He was a man weighing over two hundred pounds, and the biggest specimen of baby the camp could show.

"No, put in a couple of honest fellows, men who can keep account," said Dick, "and let the business be carried on upon the old scale. Those who have already made purchases can come now and get their change."

"Robbery!" gasped Grudge.

"They'll beggar us!" whined Higgins.

Nevertheless, that was the plan adopted, and in less than thirty minutes the store was open for business on the old plan, and the citizens of Whoop-up could buy their supplies at the usual rates—thanks to Deuce-Trey, the Five-Spot Sport, who, with the others, then returned to the Cocktail.

CHAPTER XII.

DEUCE-TREY TRADUCED.

It was quite probable that the jubilant citizens would have carried the Five-Spot Sport on their shoulders, had it been possible.

As it was, they accompanied him with whoop and cheer, and as soon as they entered the saloon they proposed a drink all around in his honor, and urged that Hurston should stand treat.

Before it came to that, however, George Clancy announced that he had something to say.

"Fellow-citizens," he spoke in loud voice, as soon as he had gained the attention of the crowd, "particularly those of you who spent last night in this room, how many of you were robbed during the night?"

"Robbed?"

"That's the word—robbed."

Those who had not heard of it looked at one another in amaze.

There was a general feeling for his wad of wealth, on the part of every galoot present.

It took but a few minutes to find out that no others missed anything, and no one save those first reported had been robbed.

"Well," Clancy explained to them, "Mr. Bergman, Mr. Hurston, Mr. Terrell and myself, all were robbed, and now the question is—who was the thief? We are determined to find him."

They were silent all.

"We are all known to one another here," the gambler continued, "and there was only one stranger with us, and there is the man."

He pointed at Deuce-Trey.

"Ther Five-Spot Sport!"

"Yes."

"Oh, no; no, no," said the crowd, almost as one man. "Ther Deuce-Trey ain't no thief."

"He's ther whitest man that ever struck Whoop-up," some fellow added. "We'll stand by ther sport to ther end, you bet we will!"

"Well, this thing has got to be sifted," declared Clancy, determinedly; "and how many of you who spent the night in this room are willing to be searched? You are about all here."

"Yer kin search me."

"Yas, an' yer kin search me, too."

And so the cry went around, not a man objecting.

"And I am perfectly willing to show up with the rest," said the sport.

"Do you see any objection to this, Mr. Hurston? or you, Mr. Bergman?" asked the gambler.

"No; it appears to be all right," they answered.

"Then let it begin. Who will you appoint as searchers, Mr. Hurston?"

"You can do it yourself, if you want to," was the reply. "Not a desirable office."

"You are right it isn't, and rather than force it upon any one else I will undertake the unpleasant task. Now, then, one at a time."

He stepped forward, and the work began.

The men seemed perfectly willing, and stepped up promptly, but nothing was discovered.

The Chinaman was the last, that is to say, the last save the Five-Spot Sport, and he stepped up as promptly as the rest. This did not, however, include the men who had been robbed.

Nothing was found in the pockets of the Chinese that did not belong to him, and he was cleared.

"Now, stranger, it is your turn," said Clancy.

"As well now as any time," said Dick, "but I am not the last, let me call attention."

"Not the last! What do you mean?"

"Mean what I say. You have not yet shown up, neither has Mr. Terrell, nor Mr. Hurston, nor Mr. Bergman—"

"Well, confound your impudence! As if we would rob ourselves—"

"Or as if I would rob you! You can confound my impudence all you want to, but if I submit to this indignity you have got to do the same. Do you understand that, my friend?"

"That's right, that's right!" cried men in the crowd.

"Well, if, you say so, boys," agreed Clancy. "But, let me call your attention to the fact that the sport was the first man that squealed."

"There was no squealing about it," the Deuce-Trey denied.

"You were the first to raise an objection."

"And it was a just one."

The sport was searched, and nothing was found upon him that any one could lay claim to.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he asked.

"No, I am not, for one," Clancy protested, promptly.

"Neither am I," added Terrell. "Haven't he a bag and strap last night?"

The sport had brought such a thing with him, true enough, and it was now in the kitchen where he had bunked.

"He certainly had," cried Clancy. "Where is that article, stranger? We may as well go the whole hog, while we are about it."

"That appears to be your nature," retorted the sport. "You will find the bag where I bunked."

"Step in there and see if you can find it, will you, Terrell?"

That worthy complied, and soon reappeared with the bag in hand, giving it over to the searcher.

"Ha! it is locked," Clancy announced. "Will you open it, sir?"

"Certainly," said the sport.

He had only a few toilet articles and some cartridges in it, and had no objection to exposing its contents.

Unlocking it, he handed it back again to the gambler, without opening it, saying as he did so:

"I hope you will be satisfied presently, sir, that I'm not the thief."

"We are only making a thorough— Ha! hello!"

Opening the bag, he uttered these exclamations as his eyes fell upon the contents, and he pulled the bag open wide and exposed it to the view of all.

There, to the amazement of every beholder, were several watches, a pocketbook, and other articles.

"As fine a bluff as I ever saw!" exclaimed the gambler. "He thought by his show of willingness to open this bag that we would forego examining it, but he got sadly left. Boys, there is the thief!"

"You are a liar, sir," said the sport, coolly. "This has been a put-up job on me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Terrell. "Worse and worse."

"I say it has been a put-up job," Dick repeated. "Does it stand to reason, that I would stoop to the stealing of these petty articles, after my fine winnings of last night, to say nothing about the risk? I was well enough beeled when I came here, and only a fool would take such a risk."

"Is this more bluffing?" demanded Clancy.

"Here is the proof, right before our eyes, boys. You were witnesses to the fact that this bag was locked, and that he had to open it, and yet he claims it was a put-up job, as he calls it. Only fools will take any stock in such a tale as that."

"And let me call your attention to the fact, citizens, that these two fellows are my foes, after the events of last night, and that this is just such a scheme as men of their caliber would be likely to attempt. I came here alone, boys, without friend or backing, but I give you my word that I am innocent of this contemptible act."

"And you know me for a square man, boys," iterated Clancy.

"What is more," cried Terrell, "I am strongly convinced, citizens of Whoop-up, that this fellow is the thief advertised for on that poster over there on the wall. The description tallies to a T, and I'm willing to bet a dollar to ten that this so-called Deuce-Trey is Howard Smithy, the bank robber—the runaway cashier!"

"Have you any proof to support that?" asked the sport.

"The proof is on the face of it; you answer the description."

"By the way, so might you, if you had a mustache on your lip. How long have you been here, anyhow, Mr. Terrell?"

The fellow started, his face paled just enough to be noticed, and he might have hesitated in his reply had he been given the chance, but Clancy spoke promptly.

"See that?" he demanded. "Don't that look like the effort of a guilty man to squirm out of a tight place? I am of the same opinion as Terrell, that this fellow is no other than Smithy!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded the sport.

Dick had recognized that a climax was at hand, and that these two fellows were about to reach for their guns, so he produced his own and covered them as he uttered the words.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPORT SCORES THE POINT.

It was a question to the point.

What were they going to do about it, indeed! It did not look as if they would do much of anything, just then.

"Isn't that further proof?" demanded Clancy. "What reason has he to draw his guns and stand on the defensive, if he is innocent? Innocent men don't act that way, boys."

"Innocent and guilty alike have to defend themselves against such curs as you," retorted Dick. "You were on the point of drawing your own pops, and I thought I would get there first, that was all. Now, then, what do you intend to do about it?"

"That's what's the matter," cried Ben Banty.

"You bettee!" echoed the Chinese.

"That is for the crowd to say," spoke up Terrell. "I have called your attention to the fact that this fellow answers the description of Smithy, boys; now, what will you do about it? He ought to be arrested, on the double charge, and made to prove himself."

"I am innocent until you can prove me guilty," retorted the Five-Spot Sport.

"And what more proof do you ask than this?" demanded Clancy, exposing again the

contents of the bag. "Isn't this your watch, Mr. Bergman?"

"It certainly is."

"And yours, Mr. Hurston?"

"Yes."

"Take what belongs to you, gentlemen," said Deuce-Trey. "I certainly cannot claim the articles, and I have no knowledge how they came in my bag, although I have a strong suspicion."

"Allee samee me too," put in Chin Shang.

"What is your suspicion?" sullenly demanded Clancy.

"That you and this fellow Terrell did it, out of revenge. That is the pull."

"Ha! ha! ha! Well, that is about the weakest thing yet. Why, we were robbed ourselves!"

"That makes no difference; that is all the stronger against you. I was not robbed, and if guilty it would have been to my interest to pretend that I had been. I am not done with you yet."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. You have put all these honest fellows to the shame of being searched, myself included, and now I am going to search you!"

The fellows paled, both of them.

"We won't submit to it," cried Terrell, indignantly.

"Oh, yes you will!" assured the sport. "If you don't I'll be under the painful necessity of putting my trade-mark on you, and that won't be good for your health."

"But, what will you search us for? The things have been found, and that in your possession. You can't get out of that."

"I'll show you without loss of time. Chin Shang, you just go through their pockets and see what they have got in the way of keys, will you?"

"You bettee!" and the Chinese sprung to the task immediately, Dick holding a gun under the nose of each man while it was being done.

Each man had a ring of keys, Clancy only a few, but Terrell quite a large number of all sorts and sizes, and the Chinese held them up to view.

"Good enough!" said the sport. "Now, just see if there is one in the lot that will fit the bag."

The Celestial grinned and set about the task.

He was only a minute in finding a key that opened the bag as well as if it had been made for it.

"Ha! allee samee me findes him!" he cried.

"Now, who steal watchee?"

"That's the question," responded the sport. "Now, men of Whoop-up, if there is any difference here, I think the favor is on my side. These fellows had every opportunity to put up a job like this, and I charge them with having done it. Which are you going to believe?"

"We deny it," Clancy fired back. "We had no chance to do anything of the sort, and we are not men of that stamp, anyhow. It is only a coincidence that Terrell happened to have a key that fits the bag, in a bunch of so many. If you are going to let this man off it is none of our business; we have shown him up for what he is, and can do no more."

"And you will have to take care that you don't get shown up, in turn," warned Dick.

"You are welcome to do that; we have nothing to conceal."

"Maybe not."

"Well, Mr. Hurston, what shall it be?" asked the sport.

"Why, it seems to stand a case without proof positive, either way, and I am in favor of letting it drop."

"What say the citizens?"

"Let 'er drop!" was the shout. "You are white, sport, every time, and they will have to make out a stronger case 'n that, 'fore we go back on ye! Ain't that so, boys?"

"That's what at ar'," was the approval. "We owe ther sport our favor, fer the way he dumped Grudge & Higgins, an' you kin bet we ain't goin' back on him 'less we have to."

"Thank you, boys," said Deuce-Trey. "You'll find that I'll prove up all right, in the end. Now, you fellows, I warn you not to run up against me again, for if you do you will hear something drop. Your little scheme fell through this time, but I am on to you."

If looks would kill, the looks of Clancy and Terrell must have struck the sport dead, as they turned and left the room.

"How long have those men been here?"

"Four or five months," answered Bergman.

"And Terrell is in the bank here?"

"Yes," Hurston answered.

"A relation of yours?"

"No; but he came well recommended and I employed him."

"Where does he hail from?"

"Chicago."

"That place not good enough for him?"

"He set out originally in search of health, he tells me. He was in the Lake National Bank there, as teller."

"He and Clancy came here about the same time?"

"Nearly so, I guess. But, they were strangers to each other, and have only recently become friendly."

"Terrell was well fixed, I take it, by the way he put up the good last night in the game."

"Yes; his father was a rich man, and his estate has just been settled up and Robert came in for quite a plum. As he had confidence in my bank here he decided to deposit with me."

"He is all right, no doubt."

"But Clancy is not, sir, and I am sorry to see the young man so friendly with him. I am going to speak to him about it, and I hope the lesson of last night will open his eyes."

"If it hasn't, it will be likely to yet," said Dick, in a mysterious way.

Just then some men entered to announce that the tunnel had been completed to Samuel Bergman's cottage.

"Then I must go home immediately and see what is in the larder," said the mine-manager. "This snow may keep us shut in for a month."

"And with your permission I will go with you, sir," said the Five-Spot Sport. "I want to talk with you privately."

"And you want to see ther gal you have got a mortgage on, too, hey?"

"Well, yes, I won't deny it," replied Dick.

"You are welcome, of course," said Bergman, with good grace.

It could hardly have been otherwise, for the sport was virtually owner of everything.

They left the saloon together, and Bergman piloted the way through the tunnels in the direction of his home, for by this time the tunnels were numerous.

Nearly every citizen had burrowed his way out of his cabin, or his way to it if he had been out all night, and the camp was like a mysterious labyrinth, in which the stranger could be easily lost.

This statement is no exaggeration; scarcely a winter passes but some camp far up in the mountain is snowed under, and sometimes fatally for the luckless inhabitants.

"One thing I wanted to say to you, Mr. Bergman," informed Dick, as they plunged along, "is this: Do not imagine that I am going to push you to the wall, or try to do so, for that is far from my intention. This I will prove to you presently. I think you will find it well for you that I won your pile rather than that gambler."

"I am ready to believe that, sir," was the earnest reponse, and Bergman stopped and gave his hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEUCE-TREY SEES LILLIE.

THE mine-owner found that the tunnel had been burrowed to his front door, after two or three false starts, and he found the door unlocked.

He opened it and entered, inviting the sport to follow, and a glad, girlish voice was heard from somewhere up-stairs calling to ask if it was he, to which the father gladly responded.

Bergman, and his visitor likewise, removed the snow from his boots, and while they were thus engaged the daughter came running lightly down the stairs, coming down from the very top of the house, as it sounded to Dick, but at sight of the stranger she checked her rush.

"Your pardon; I did not know you had company, papa," she said.

"That is all right, my dear," Bergman responded. "This is my friend, Mr. Trey. My daughter, Mr. Trey."

Dick smiled at the manner in which the mine-owner got around his peculiar name, at the same time making his bow to the young lady, who was certainly good-looking if he was any judge.

The light in the hall, however, was only dim.

"Permit me to welcome you, sir," said the little lady, gracefully. "Papa, I will light the lamps in the sitting-room immediately, so that you can see. But, you really ought to go to the attic and look out— Oh! what a sight it is!"

"The whole camp snowed under, of course."

"You will say so, when you see it. Why, there are not more than five or six buildings peeping out through it, and it looks so funny to see the smoke from the cabins and shanties coming up through the snow everywhere!"

They had entered the sitting room, and the lamps were now lighted.

Dick had now a good chance to see the face of the young lady, and he almost gave a start.

It was the very likeness of the one he had seen—the photograph which Frank Douglas had shown him, allowing, of course, for the changes which four years would naturally bring.

"You will pardon me, friend Bergman," he spoke up; "but I am sure I have met your daughter before—have seen her before, at any rate."

"Yes?" said the girl.

"Did you not live in Virginia City four or five years ago?"

The girl glanced at her father, and Dick thought he detected a meaning expression in their eyes.

"That is our permanent place of residence, sir," Bergman answered.

"Then I have certainly seen Miss Bergman there— But, hold on, for that cannot be, either; that was not the name of the person I have in mind."

"What was the name of the person?" asked the girl.

"Her name was Delia Douglas."

Again the girl looked at her father.

"Papa, there really must be such a person," she spoke. "That man was not so crazy, after all."

"It certainly looks that way, now," Bergman acknowledged. "But, it seems hard to believe that there could be two persons looking so very much alike. I cannot understand it."

"To what man do you refer?" asked Dick.

"A man calling himself Frank Douglas, sir."

"That was the name of the father of the lady I have in mind. She was only a school-miss at the time, however."

"Then there can be no mistake, so far as concerns two persons looking so nearly alike, impossible as it seems. The man, however,

was crazy in the way he insisted that my daughter was his child."

"It sounds like a romance," assumed Dick.

"And it is like one, too, sir. The first we knew of such a man was when he met my daughter on the street in Virginia City one day and publicly kissed her, almost frightening her into fits. Then, afterward, he came here and urged his claim, and we had almost to drive him away."

"I cannot blame him for the mistake," said Dick. "Indeed, it is hard to believe that you are not indeed Delia Douglas, Miss Bergman."

"I hope you are not going to insist that I am she, sir."

"Oh, no, I'll not do that. I fancy it would be quite useless, for undoubtedly you could pile up proof of your identity in a way that would speedily convince me."

"If you are open to conviction, sir."

"And certainly I am."

"Mr. Douglas was not."

"Do not say that, Lillie," chided Bergman. "I think we convinced him, although he found it hard to yield the point."

"The proof certainly should have convinced him, anyhow."

"Well, Mr. Trey will take dinner with us, so you must see to it that Dinah gets up the right kind of repast."

"You can trust Dinah for that, papa; but, she or I will have to go to the store, if it is possible to get there, and I want to go, for it will be such a novelty to walk under the snow! But, we can both go, and then you cannot object."

"Yes, you may go. I will hand you some money when you are ready."

She tripped from the room, and Bergman turned immediately to his guest, adding in low tone:

"That is, if you will lend me a little for the present emergency, Mr. Trey. How do you like the name I have bestowed upon you?"

"I will inform you of a better one, ere long," Dick lightly answered. "Trey will do for the present. As to money, here is what was won from you last night, or as much as came my way."

He took from an inner pocket a package with Mr. Bergman's name on it and delivered it.

"This is more than I had any right to expect," said the mine-owner.

"When you come to examine it," Dick added, "you will see that I have retained only one paper."

"And that one—"

"Your written promise of your daughter's hand in marriage."

Mr. Bergman's face looked dark, but he said nothing just then. He took some money from the packet.

His daughter appeared at that moment and he handed the money to her, and throwing him a kiss from the doorway she disappeared and left the house in company with the colored woman.

"I hardly know what I was thinking about last night," Mr. Bergman then said, reflectively. "I was crazed with the passion of gambling, that is certain. I feel like a monster, now, as I think of it. But, I felt sure of winning, and the bait was a big one for Clancy."

"He had been seeking your daughter's hand?"

"Yes."

"Well, he will have to bid high for it now, Mr. Bergman. By the way, you need not let it be known that I have restored this money to you, and the other papers which you put up at the game."

"As you wish."

"I prefer to have it kept secret for the present. May not be worth the effort, and again it may. Now, Mr. Bergman, you will answer a question candidly?"

"Am I not under obligation to you?"
 "That has nothing to do with it. Will you do it?"
 "I will."
 "Good enough. Now, do you know anything about the mystery of Delia Douglas?"

The mine-owner looked at him keenly.
 "Candidly," he then said, "I know nothing about it. It is a strange coincidence that the person should look so much like my daughter, though."

"If the resemblance was only slight, it could not call for remark, for that frequent happens; but any one who has ever seen Delia Douglas or her likeness would be willing to swear that your daughter is she."

"I cannot understand it. I will swear, if necessary, that the young lady you have just seen is my daughter."

"That is all I can ask."

"Are you interested in the matter, sir?"

"Well, yes, knowing Douglas, since you have told me his child is missing and he is searching for her."

"I hope you can clear the mystery up, then, for I am considerably interested in it myself, now that it has been shown that Frank Douglas was not crazy, as I had good reason to suppose. It is not likely that both you and he would be afflicted in the same manner."

CHAPTER XV.

FIRE-EATER FLIP'S TURNOVER.

DEADWOOD DICK, JR., spent a pleasant time at the Bergman cottage.

He liked Bergman, the more he came to know him, and as for the daughter, he liked her even more.

Of course, he did not make known to her the written promise he held. He was not the man to make the father's weakness known to the child. It was enough that he held the paper.

Holding it, he could keep Clancy at bay, and thought he could, until such time as matters could be righted.

Finally he took leave and returned to the cocktail.

There everything was in high feather, everybody had had dinner, the fire was burning merrily, and all were happy all around.

The appearance of the Five-Spot Sport was hailed with delight, and as they had just been having some fun with the two storekeepers, Deuce-Trey had to be told all about

Grudge and Higgins, by the way, had been leased, but were not allowed to resume charge of their store.

They had been promised that a just and true account would be kept.

With this they had to be satisfied.

They were a sheepish pair, now, after the and failure they had made in the attempt to rob their fellow townsmen, and had but little to say concerning that matter to any one.

They had come into the Cocktail a little while before the Five-Spot Sport's return, and had called for drinks. It had happened that Williams was out, and the Chinaman, Chin Shang, was in his place behind the bar. The eyes of the Celestial twinkled immediately.

"Fifty centee all around," he said to them.

They protested since they had made a failure of their "dollar a pound" experiment.

Protestation was useless, however; the Chinnee stuck to his figure, supported by his nose in the room, and as the fellows wanted the drinks they had come for they had to put up the price.

Chin Shang was still behind the bar, and when Dick had listened to this story, recited by Ben Banty, he stepped to the bar and poked to Douglas in a low tone.

"Well, I have seen the girl," he said.

"What do you think?"

"I could swear that she is the original of the picture."

"And so she is too. I cannot tell what to make of it. What do you think is the mystery?"

"The mystery is, that there are two girls, sir. This one is not your child; of that I am certain. I watched the Bergmans closely, and there is no sham about them. You were on the wrong trail."

"I will never believe it."

"You'll have to."

"Then you feel certain there are two?"

"Positively. But it is all a mystery, and no clue to it thus far."

"And so you are going to leave it for me to work out alone, if I can? I hoped much for your help."

"I have not said that I give it up. I will try to get at the mystery for you, if I can get hold of a clue to work on. I'll investigate further when opportunity offers."

"All right; do so. Now, I have a word for you."

"What is it?"

"You know Fire-eater Flip, the fellow who cared for your horse?"

"Certainly."

"He is a bad man, and a desperate fellow when aroused. He wouldn't stop a bit short of crime, if it suited his purpose, I imagine. In fact, I know."

"Well?"

"He is looking for you, and I thought I would put you on your guard against him, for I saw him talking with Terrell not long ago. A short time after, he told me quietly to tell you he wanted to see you."

"All right; he'll find me here if he comes in."

"He won't come in. He said he wanted to see you at his cabin. He has a brother there who is sick."

"That's different. But, I am not afraid of him, and as I have nothing to do at present I'll hunt him up, just to kill time. Where is his shanty?"

"It is past the store. You go right on, and he said he would be on the lookout for you. But, my opinion is that you had better be wary how you trust him, for he may mean you harm."

"I don't believe it. I think I have the good will of that fellow."

"All right; but look out for him anyhow."

"Yes, I will do that."

The sport left the saloon and made his way through the tunnel in the direction of the store.

The tunnel had by this time been much traveled, and it was easy traveling through it. It was a peculiar experience, but one not by any means new to Deadwood Dick.

When he came to the store he noted that there were other tunnels on the right leading further down the gulch, and while he was considering which one he should take a man stepped out from one of them and motioned him to follow, and Dick recognized the man.

"You wanted to see me, Fire-eater?" he asked, when he overtook him.

"Yes, but we'll go to my shanty, if you don't mind."

"Do you mean me fair?"

"I swear I do."

Dick said no more, then, but saw to it that his guns were ready for instant use, should he need them.

Presently the tunnel was nothing more than a hole, the walls of which touched their shoulders as they proceeded, and finally, after a sharp descent, they came to the door of a shanty.

Fire-eater opened it, and they passed in.

There was a light and a fire, and on a bunk in a corner lay a sick man.

It took but a glance to satisfy Deadwood Dick that no danger menaced him at present, anyhow.

"Set ye down," invited his host. "Jake

hyer is sick, an' I was a brute ter fergit him ther way I did last night, but I'm goin' to try an' make up fer et by better 'tention to him now."

"That's a good resolve. What's the trouble, sir?" to the sick man.

"I am just out of a fever," was the answer. "I'll mend now, if I get food and care for a few days."

Dick noted that there was more refinement about this man than there was about Fire-eater, and that the language he used was of a little higher order.

"I'll tell ye how et is," explained Fire-eater. "Jake, hyer, has got a pious vein in his make-up; he's one of them Christian fellers; while as fer me, ther devil has got a holt on me big as a hog."

Dick had to smile, while he remarked that he felt great respect for Jake.

"You ain't one o' them fellers, too, be ye?" asked Fire-eater.

"Well, I am and I am not; I'm an honest, sincere believer, but there is no open profession about it."

"No matter; we ain't to ther point. I found Jake nigh about froze an starved out, when I got hyer, an' he was a-prayin' like a good feller, not so much for himself as fer me— Durn et, he would 'a' served me right ef he had plugged me full o' lead."

No! no! the brother protested.

"I didn't say nothin'," Fire-eater continued, "but I went right to work, an' I had made up my mind ter do ther white thing from that minute. I had been a hard customer, and everybody knowed et. Now, one thing, I knowed who it was that stole them watches last night, an' I was paid ter say nothin'. I'll put you onto that, purty soon, after I have told somethin' else."

"It is hardly necessary," assured Dick; "I know them already."

"Wull, no matter; I'll tell ye somethin' that ye don't know, then. I have been paid five hundred dollars to put you out of ther way, sport, and I've got three hundred of et in my pocket this minute. What d'ye think o' that?"

"I'm not surprised, except to say that I would never have thought it of you," Dick responded.

"Hold on, sport! Don't judge me wrong. I wouldn't 'a' done it fer five thousand dollars. I took ther offer jest ter serve you, don't ye see? If you hadn't done ther business fer them 'ar rascally storekeepers I reckon me an' my brother hyer would soon go starved, an' I ain't ther man to go back on a friend. You used me white from ther first minute when you got hyer last night, an' now I'll try an' square up ther 'count with ye!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SHAMUS MCCALL PUZZLED.

DEADWOOD DICK, JUNIOR, gave his hand to the rough fellow, unreservedly.

"I am thankful to you, Fire-eater," he said. "Maybe you would have been able to carry out your contract, had you been against me."

"We won't talk about that, pard."

"All right. But, one thing, you won't be sorry you were with me and not against me, I imagine, when things come out and you learn who I am. But, enough of that for the present."

"I don't keer a durn who ye aire; you ar' white, and that is enough fer me."

"What was the plan for my demise?"

"There was a death signal arranged, and when that went off you was ter go off with et. But, et won't work accordin' to programme, now."

"And Terrell and Clancy are the rascals who hired you for the job?"

"Them's the birds, pardner."

"They seemed to have confidence in you."

"They thought they had me, don't ye see."

I seen 'em at their work last night in the saloon, stealin' the watches—"

"Ha! it was as I thought. I was sure of it."

"Yes, they was the boys what done ther trick, an' when they got done I let 'em know that I was onto 'em, an' this mornin' they bought my silence. I s'pose it was when we was at ther store that they put the watches in your bag."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Well, they paid me to keep still, an' thinkin' they had a grip on me they unfolded this hyer other business to me. They are a p'izen pair, sure as you live, an' you want to keep your eye peeled fer 'em all the time, no matter if they have 'gaged me."

"I'll try to. But, what is the death signal to be?"

"Yes, that's a p'int you must know, so's to be on the lookout fer et, and I will change ther programme any way ter suit you."

"All right, we'll be able to give them more than they have bargained for, I fancy. The fact of the business is, we'll turn the tables on them and they will suffer accordingly."

"You don't mean to kill 'em?"

"No; take them prisoners."

"That's better, fer I am not willin' to go inter blood."

"Not necessary. I'll have them well in hand, by that time, and there will be some fun."

"Well, fer ther signal. It is ter take place this evenin', when you will most probably be at the Cocktail Saloon."

"I'll likely be there."

"I am to come in and lure you out, with a lie of some sort, and lead you to the edge of a big hole, to which a tunnel will be made in ther meantime."

"Quite an interreting programme, certainly."

"They will foller, and at the right moment I'm ter drop down on the ground and they will open fire on you, an' over into the hole you will go, with bullets in yer b'iler."

"And your dropping will be the signal?"

"Yes, an' when I drop they will let drive. But, I have thought of a trick worth two of that."

"What is it?"

"They ar' to foller, as I told ye."

"Yes."

"But they won't ketch up. I'm to stop with you at the edge of the hole, an' keep you thar a minute till they come in sight."

"But it will be dark."

"I'll have a lantern, an' I'll see 'em soon's they round a bend that will be made near the hole. They have laid it all out fine, ye see. You will be missin', an' that will be all of it."

"And what is your scheme?"

"Well, I'll tell ye: I'll rig up a dummy there, an' I'll dig a niche in the snow fer you ter hide in as we go along. That will be just short of the bend, an' you kin let ther rascals pass ye."

"I see."

"Then you will be behind 'em. I'll drop, holdin' the light so's they kin aim well, an' they'll peg away at the dummy, an' I'll push it over into the hole with my foot. Then up I'll get and run back towards 'em with the light, and by that time you will chip in."

"You can bet your life I will!" cried Dick, grimly.

"You will 'a' stole up behind 'em, an' you will have one of yer five-spots poked under the ear of each man."

"It is a good plan, Fire eater, and it is bound to work. You carry out your part, and I will fall in with your scheme in a way that will make them think they have got an easy victim."

"All right; then that's understood."

"Yes."

Dick took his leave, returning to the saloon alone, and Terrell and Clancy were there, playing a game at poker.

There was a greater crowd present than on the previous evening, for now all the men who had been at home then had dug their way out and had congregated at this popular rendezvous.

Deadwood Dick passed through and into the kitchen, where he had a brief talk with Chin Shang.

As he returned to the main room Shamus McCall came in.

"Begorra, Oi wish dhere was a docthor in dhis camp," the Irishman declared with concern.

"What do you want with a doctor, Shamus?" inquired Buck Williams. "Who is sick? Is Jake Phillips any worse?"

"Oi don't know any'ing about Jake Phillips," returned Shamus, "but Oi do know dhat wan av dhem wimmin what came to me shanty last noight is moighty sick."

Shamus had before mentioned these women.

Everybody had forgotten about them, however, or had shown no interest.

"What seems to be the matter?" asked the Five-Spot Sport.

"Oi am afraid it is all up wid her, sor. She was cl'ane gone whin dhey got to me dhure last noight, and she seems to kape on goin' down, though Oi have done all Oi know fur dhe poor soul."

"Suppose I go with you to see her?"

"I wish ye would."

"I'll do it. I'm no doctor, but I have done a good deal in the way of nursing in my time."

"And if anything is wantin' in the way of whisky, or anything else this hyer ranch affords," spoke up Buck Williams, "all you have got ter do is ter come and ask fer et, Shamus."

"T'ank ye, Buck," the Irishman rejoined.

"Oi'll moind dhat."

With that he went out, Dick following.

"Dhere is sometin' strange about dhese wimmin," Shamus declared, as they passed along through the tunnel.

"How is that?"

"It is dhe youngest wan Oi spake of."

"And what is there strange about her? Some mystery attached?"

"Oi should say, begorra, dhat dhere was. It is sometin' dhat Oi can't git t'rough dhe head av me."

"Well, what is it?"

"Oi'll be tellin' ye: Ye see, sor, Oi did not git much av a glimpse at thim last noight, fur Oi gave up me bed to thim and bunked mesel' out in dhe lean-to beyanst and left thim alone."

"I see."

"But, awhile ago, Oi got me first good look at dhe young wan, fur ye know how dark it is here under dhe snow, sor, and phwat was me surprise to foind dhat Oi knowed her well."

"You knew her?"

"Dhat same Oi did—at any rate Oi t'ought Oi did."

"But you were mistaken."

"Dhat same Oi was, it seems. Oi could have sworn upon me oath dhat it was Bergman's daughter."

"Lillie Bergman?"

"Dhat same; and, Oi am not yet prepared to swear dhat it isn't, although the young lady calls herself by another name entoirely; sometin' loike Dalie Douglas, Oi belave it is, sor."

CHAPTER XVII.

DEUCE-TREY'S SNAP SHOT.

NEEDLESS to say, all Deadwood Dick's keenest interest was alive in an instant, and he was eager to reach the shanty.

Here, most unexpectedly, had come in his way the means of clearing up the mystery

of Frank Douglas's wife and daughter—or, at any rate, that of the daughter, for this was she.

He said little more on the way, leaving Shamus to do the talking, and in due time their destination was reached.

Shamus opened the door of his shanty and they entered.

The room was one of fair size, and on a bed on one side lay the form of a woman.

A younger woman sat beside her, on a stool, and a lamp on a rude table in one corner made the room light, so that everything could be seen plainly.

The young woman rose as they stepped in. She looked toward them, and Deadwood Dick recognized at once the face of Lillie Bergman!

"They are twins," he said to himself, in mind. "It can be explained in no other way— And yet, that cannot be, for then it would be no mystery to Douglas, or should not be."

He could not understand it, and from her face Dick looked to the face of the older woman on the bed.

It was instantly plain that death had set its seal there, and that the woman's hours of life must be few.

Dick recognized in her face the same general cast of features seen in the faces of the two girls, and to the younger woman he said:

"Your mother?"

"Yes, sir," the tearful response.

"What is her name?" Dick next inquired.

"It is Martha Douglas, sir."

"And yours?"

"Delia."

"Your father is dead?"

"Do not speak his name to me; I never want to hear it!"

Deadwood Dick was surprised, after the affection Frank Douglas had expressed for his child.

And this mystery? It was deeper than ever. If Douglas's wife left him immediately after the birth of her child, how came the daughter to know her? Why did the child hate the father?

There was a possible way to find out.

Dick sat down on the stool and felt of the woman's pulse, and as he did so she opened her eyes and looked at him.

"Do you think I will live?" she asked.

"I would not deceive you, madam," the prince of detectives answered. "You have but a brief time to live."

At this the girl began sobbing aloud.

"Thank you, sincerely," said the woman.

"If that is true, there is something I must disclose before I pass away, for my life has been a lie for many years and I must right a wrong I have done."

"Mamma?"

"It is true, my child, it is true. I have deceived you terribly. It was your father who was honorable; I was the false one."

The girl sobbed as if her heart must break, and tears appeared in the sick woman's eyes and coursed down her sunken cheeks as she lay bolstered upon the pillows.

"Where is your other child, madam?" asked Deadwood Dick.

She turned upon him with a look almost of terror in her eyes, and her breath came in gasps.

"What—what do you know?" she demanded.

"I know something about your past," answered Dick. "If you have any thing to repair the wrong you must disclose."

"I will do so, I will gladly do so, now! You must hear my story, and I want you to restore this child to her father, and perhaps her sister can be found and they may be happy, yet."

"And their father is Frank Douglas?"

"Yes—I think so."

"What mystery is here, madam?"

"It is a long story, sir; it will take time for me to tell it."

"And it must be reduced to writing, as you tell it, too," said Dick. "Shamus, have you any paper?"

"Dhat same Oi have, sor."

"Get it, at once."

Dick made ready as quickly as possible, and then told the woman to go ahead with her story, giving it in her own way, as short as possible but at the same time omitting nothing important.

It was the work of an hour, reducing the confession to writing.

By the time it was done the woman had grown much weaker, and it could be seen that her time was short.

"Now, madam, you have made this confession in the presence of these witnesses," remarked Dick. "Do you swear that it is true, and are you willing to sign it as the truth?"

"Yes, yes; let me sign it. I swear it is true."

She was assisted, and affixed her name to the page—Martha Douglas. It was her last earthly act.

Deadwood Dick folded the paper and put it in his pocket.

"Would you like to see either of these men before you die?" he then asked, in kindly tone.

"It is too late," was the faint response. "It took all my strength for the confession. Besides, I could not bear their scorn, and perhaps their words of reproach."

Dick saw that it was indeed too late, so he let it pass.

The girl, who had heard all, sat in the furthest corner, silently weeping.

Deadwood Dick called Shamus out into the lean-to.

"You see the end is near, Shamus," he said, "and I depend on you, now, to aid me in a certain work I have to do."

"Dhat same Oi will do, sor, an' it is any-thing dhat is fair and honest and not to be ashamed av."

"I undertake work of no other kind, my friend. Did you ever hear of Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"Phwat! Are you dhat divil's own detective Oi have heard and read so much about?"

"Yes, I am he. Say nothing about it, but serve me well."

"Bedad, Oi'll go t'rough foire fur ye, me b'y!"

"That is enough, with what I have seen of you. When the woman is dead, make it known, but caution the girl not to be seen. I will give her a word of explanation before I go."

"Yis."

"Get some women to lay the body out, and if there is a carpenter to be had, get him to make a coffin. Here is money for it, and no one needs to know who is paying for the service. Then, let the body be properly arranged for burial. By that time I'll see you again."

"All roight, sor."

Dick returned to the room and spoke to the young woman in low tones.

She looked up quickly while he was speaking, a new light breaking upon her face, and she nodded at what he said.

After one more look at the dying woman, noting that she was beyond all human aid, Dick left the house—rather shanty—and returned to the saloon, where Terrell and Clancy were still playing.

Just as Dick entered the door Terrell sprang to his feet with an oath, with revolver in hand.

Clancy was upon his feet only a second later, reaching for a gun.

"Cheat me, would you!" cried Terrell, and he was speaking the words, but missed the mark.

Deadwood Dick gave a start, for the bullet

had come within an ace of his head, and he knew in the instant that he had been the target and not Clancy!

Terrell fired again, in the same instant, almost, and the second bullet came even nearer than the first, Dick feeling it graze the skin on the side of his neck as it passed.

It required but a second for Dick to draw and fire, and with a howl of pain Terrell dropped his gun and grabbed his hand, and blood began to trickle from the ends of his fingers. Deadwood Dick had practiced one of his famous snap-shots upon him, and with good effect.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MYSTERY OF MARTHA HILLS.

WHILE everybody else was making a hasty scramble for cover, Deadwood Dick advanced straight upon Terrell and Clancy, with weapons covering them.

"You contemptible cur!" he said to Terrell. "For two cents I would put my trade-mark on you that would make you a subject for the coroner, if you have got one here."

Terrell was still holding his hand and howling.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Clancy, turning upon Dick. "I can take care of my own quarrels, without asking help from you."

"I see through it," retorted Dick. "It was an attempt upon my life."

"You are a fool!"

"Maybe I am, but not fool enough to let that pass without chipping in. The man could not have missed you, at that range, had he shot at you, but he fired at me. I saw the second shot, aimed straight at me, and I feel the sting of the bullet on my neck."

"Yes, and there is the mark, too," cried Buck Williams.

"I call all present to bear witness to this," exclaimed Dick. "If anything happens to me you will know where to begin your investigation, if you consider it worth investigating. And you, fellows, if you run up against me just once more you will repent it."

Clancy turned upon Terrell, to make perfect the deception.

"You are a liar, if you say I cheated you," he cried. "You are not the man I took you to be. Take your money, and I will take mine, and we'll stop right here."

And that, finally, after some parley, was done.

But, Dick had shown up their game, and most of those present believed what he alleged.

An hour later Shamus McCall entered the saloon and made the announcement that the woman at his shanty was dead, and he spoke to some of the miners about getting their wives to lay her out.

The rest of the day passed with the usual amount of excitement, and in the evening the saloon was filled to its greatest capacity.

Fire-eater Flip came in and spoke to Deuce-Trey.

The Five-Spot Sport followed him from the room, and together they made their way along through the snow tunnels.

Fire-eater carried a lantern, and but little was said, since they had a complete understanding and both knew what was about to take place, and each was prepared to play his part.

Finally they came to a place where a niche had been made in the side wall of the tunnel.

Here Dick stopped, and Fire-eater ran on alone.

In about a minute two men passed, stealthily, and when they had gone Dick came out and crept after them, weapons in hand.

They rounded a crook in the way, and ahead were seen the figures of two men, Fire-eater and his companion, apparently,

and they were now standing and Fire-eater was talking.

Terrell and Clancy had their guns in hand, and Fire-eater glanced their way, and seeing them, he dropped flat to the ground, holding his lamp so as to give them a good light upon their supposed living target. And, immediately, both fired, two or three shots in rapid succession.

Over went the dummy, pushed by Fire-eater's foot, and it fell almost as naturally as a man, under like circumstances. And in the same moment Fire-eater leaped up and ran rapidly toward the two men who had done the shooting, holding up his lantern as if afraid they might shoot him but with an entirely different purpose in view, as the rascals soon found.

Just as Fire-eater came up, Deadwood Dick placed the cold tube of a gun behind an ear of each of the murderers, and they almost jumped out of their clothes at the contact. Fire-eater, too, had now whipped out a gun, and the two scoundrels were in so tight a fix that it was impossible for them to get out. Deadwood Dick sternly ordered them to drop their guns or he would drop them, and there was no choice for them but to obey.

They were marched back to the saloon, where Deadwood Dick introduced them and himself.

"Boys," he said, "the time for disclosure has come. I am Deadwood Dick, Junior. I came here on the track of Howard Smithy, the Tucson bank cashier. He is my prisoner here, known to you as Robert Terrell. This other is his ally, whose true name is Harris King."

The cheer that went up was deafening, and, as Dick went ahead and laid out all his proofs before them, the crowd broke out again and again.

Dick had identified the money he had won from Terrell as being mostly the stolen funds of the Tucson bank, and with other proofs he had picked up here and there his case was complete.

It would be interesting reading, had we the space to quote all that was said and done, but we have nearly reached the limit of our space and it is therefore impossible. Suffice it to say that the prisoners were securely imprisoned in the Whoop-up lock-up, under guard, and for the rest of the evening the camp proceeded to do honor to its distinguished guest.

On the following morning Chin Shang, the Chinese, had disappeared, and was not to be found. The camp was no man short, however, for Frank Douglas was there, explaining that he had just burrowed his way out of the snow-drifts and reached town, a statement that was taken with a good deal of salt, however. The Chinese was looked for, but he was utterly missing, and Ben Banty had to act as cook of the establishment for the time being.

Preparations for the funeral of the strange woman who had died at Shamus McCall's shanty had been going forward, and it was Deadwood Dick who proposed that the service should be held in the Cocktail, which was the largest room in the camp, and this was agreed to.

The camp had no preacher, but there was one old fellow, a pious soul, who usually performed such service for such of the citizens who chanced to die with their boots on—or otherwise, and he was called upon to act.

Quietly, Deadwood Dick had arranged it so that Samuel Bergman and his daughter would be present, and he had given Douglas a sufficient hint that his presence was required.

At the hour fixed upon the body was borne in, followed by Shamus and the daughter of the dead woman, the girl wearing a veil.

Deadwood Dick assumed charge.

The aged citizen read a chapter from the

Psalms and made a prayer, following with some general remarks, and took his seat.

Dick then invited Mr. Bergman and his daughter to step forward and view the remains, at the same time motioning for the woman's daughter and Mr. Douglas to do so, and these four reached the coffin together.

The instant Bergman and Douglas looked upon the face of the dead they gave voice to exclamations, and Lillie Bergman cried out—"Mamma!"

Delia Douglas had thrown up her veil, now, as Deadwood Dick had previously instructed her to do, and from the face of the dead woman the four persons looked at one another in blankest amaze. What did it mean?

"Samuel Bergman," said Deadwood Dick, "who is this dead woman?"

"She who was my wife, Martha Bergman," was the husky response.

"Frank Douglas," and Dick turned to him, "who is this dead woman?"

"She was my wife, Martha Douglas," the sad answer.

"And which of these young women is your daughter?"

Douglas looked from one to the other for a moment, in doubt, but Delia quickly solved the mystery for him by throwing herself upon his breast, sobbing.

Bergman looked on in a dazed manner.

"You are right, sir," said Dick, to Douglas; "that one is Delia. And, if she is your daughter, so is this other, for they are twin sisters."

"Twins!" exclaimed Douglas.

"Impossible!" echoed Bergman.

"The fact, nevertheless," asserted Dick.

"There is no further proof needed than their likeness to each other, and yet I have other proof and the best of proof, the dying confession of this woman."

He displayed the document as he spoke.

Impossible to quote all that passed; Dick proposed that the funeral should proceed, after which they would retire to Bergman's cottage for the explanation.

After the body had been consigned to the earth—no easy task, under the snow and with the ground frozen as it was, they repaired to the cottage, where Dick read the confession in full.

Martha Hills had been a woman easily influenced, and to her mother she owed her life's failure. Her mother was a scheming woman. Martha had two lovers at the same time, Frank Douglas and Samuel Bergman, and by advice of the scheming mother encouraged both. Douglas was poor, but Martha loved him, while Bergman was rich and him the mother favored. The mother wanted to wean Martha's affections from Douglas and turn them toward Bergman. She kept these two men apart from each other, and neither one ever knew that he had a rival.

The girl resolved to marry Douglas, but even then the mother did not give up, and in another week forced her daughter to marry Bergman! It was, she thought, her chance for life; the girl could soon decide which she liked best, and could then leave the other mysteriously and no one would be able to learn where she was. All the circumstances favored the scheme. Still, the girl clung to Douglas, although forced to share her time in the company of Bergman; and when Douglas thought she was at home with her mother she was really in the company of Bergman! To the latter she told about the same story she was telling to Douglas.

Finally, the power of money won the fight, and Martha decided that she had rather live with a rich husband than with a poor one. About this time her twins were born, and the scheming mother concealed one of these immediately, which the misguided young wife took with her when she deserted her true husband for the man she thought was her husband just as much—her

mind being entirely under the ruling of her lying mother, in all things.

With Bergman she took up her residence in a distant city, and the child Lillie with her, as said, while the other twin was left with its father, Douglas.

Thus had come about the great mystery. In after years, however, the same weak mind of the woman caused her fall. Knowing she had another child, she sought it, and, jealous of its love for her real husband, Douglas, she filled the child's mind with lies concerning him and induced the girl to go away with her as mysteriously as she herself had gone in the first instance.

All this and much more the woman's dying confession set forth, but enough has been mentioned for our purpose. With this clue, the reader can easily unravel the little that remains unexplained. It was a sad denouement for all concerned, and yet a joyous reunion for Douglas and his long-lost child, Delia.

The girls strongly resembled Douglas, while they looked nothing like Bergman at all. There was no room to doubt their parentage. But, in it all, Bergman had been an innocent victim, and he proposed that Douglas should join him in partnership in the mine he owned, in order that he might not lose the child he had always thought was his own, and in order that she might not be deprived of the wealth she had ever been accustomed to, while Delia could now begin to enjoy the same privilege. The two sisters were already embracing each other, with all the love and sympathy twins usually have for each other. So Douglas yielded to the proposition.

Deadwood Dick highly approved of the plan, and so it was settled.

When it became possible to travel, Deadwood Dick set out with his prisoners for Arizona, where he finally landed them in the Penitentiary, the right place for them.

Whoop-up gave him a rousing send-off, and promised him a hearty welcome should he ever come that way again.

THE END.

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